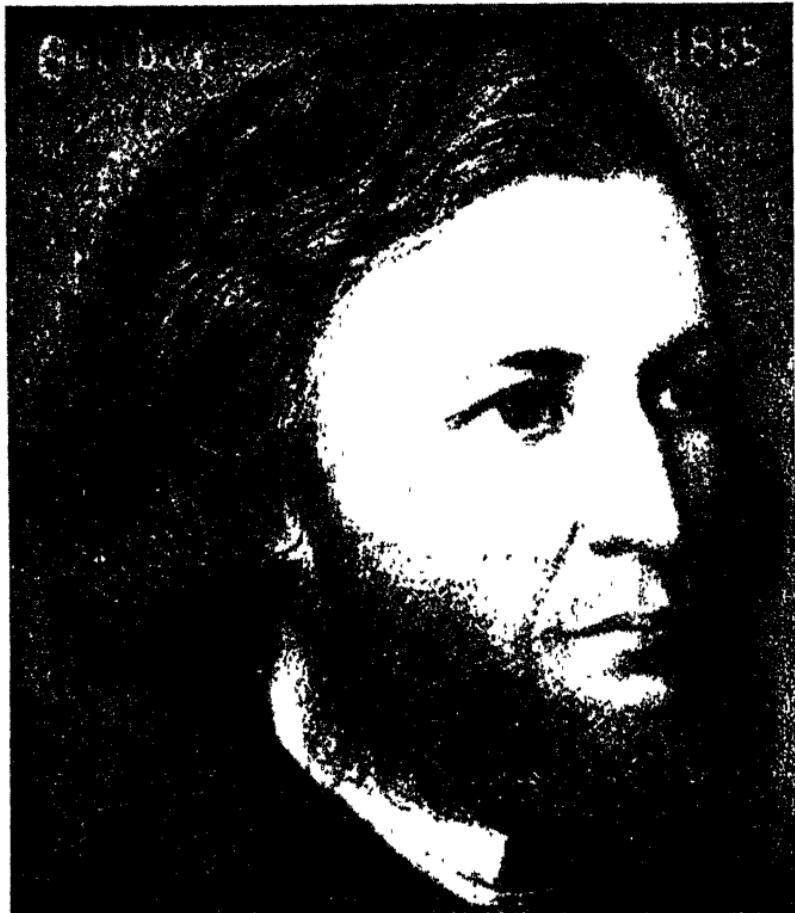


ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS
CENTENARY EDITION
IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME I



Robert Browning
(aged 43)

*From the portrait by D G Rossetti 1855-6
in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*

THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
F. G. KENYON, C.B., D.LITT.

VOLUME I—PAULINE
PARACELSIUS—SORDELLO



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P R E F A C E

A FEW words are necessary to explain the contents and arrangement of this edition of the poetry of Robert Browning.

All poems contained in the previous complete editions (those of 1888-9 and of 1896) are included in it, with the addition of a few short poems of various dates, which, though already published, have not hitherto been taken into the collected editions. Some other extant verses, which it is certain that the poet would not have wished to reprint, are deliberately excluded. The text followed is that of the last edition supervised by the poet (that of 1888-9), with the correction of a few oversights, and with the addition of a numeration of lines in all the longer poems.

A portrait is prefixed to each volume. In selecting these an attempt has been made to select the ten most characteristic portraits of the poet in existence. Particulars of thirty-three portraits (excluding photographs) are given in an appendix to the revised edition of Mrs. Orr's *Life of Robert Browning* (1908); but others have come to light since this list was compiled.

The arrangement is as nearly chronological as

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is practicable; but in the case of the shorter poems it has not been thought right to depart from the grouping adopted by the poet in the three-volume edition of 1863, and maintained subsequently. Moreover, in order to keep the volumes of approximately equal size, it has been necessary to place *Strafford* after *Sordello*; and for the same reason the translation of the *Agamemnon* precedes the *Pacchiarotto* volume, the contents of which are of various dates.

The introductions prefixed to the several volumes are in the main biographical and bibliographical. They aim at showing the position which each poem holds in Browning's life, the circumstances of its composition, and its historical setting (if any), but they do not attempt to give a commentary upon its contents. An explanatory commentary, such as may be required for Aeschylus or Dante, is at best a book of reference, not of literature; at worst it is an encumbrance or an impertinence. I believe that, even with the most difficult poems of Browning, more profit and more pleasure is to be derived from reading them without a commentary than with one; and the present edition aims at being read, not merely consulted by the student. At this centenary of Robert Browning's birth, it is as a poet that he should be presented to the world, not as the propounder of hard sayings.

For the biography of Browning the primary authorities are Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life* (1891;

PREFACE

references are made to the revised edition of 1908); the *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (1897): the *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett* (1899); and *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett* (1906). A considerable amount of additional information has been collected in the very careful *Life of Browning*, begun by Mr. W. Hall Griffin and completed by Mr. H. C. Minchin (1910); this is especially useful for the earlier part of the poet's life, for which materials were most deficient. Further items of information are to be gleaned from the *Letters from Robert Browning to Various Correspondents*, privately printed by Mr. T. J. Wise (two series, 1895-6 and 1907-8), and here utilized freely with his courteous permission, and from the papers of the Browning Society. For bibliographical facts the "Materials for a Bibliography of the Writings of Robert Browning," in Sir W. Robertson Nicoll and Mr. T. J. Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century* (1895), are very useful. From these and several other sources the introductory notes in the present edition have been drawn, in the hopes of giving the reader such information (not derivable from the poems themselves) as he may be expected to desire, while saving him the trouble of research.

And the whole work is affectionately and gratefully dedicated to the memory of the poet who, at one time unduly neglected, at others unwisely

PREFACE

praised, holds now, on the centenary of his birth, his assured place in our history by reason of the great mass of poetry of the first order, highly imagined and finely expressed, with which he has enriched the literature of England.

F. G. K.

7th May 1912.

INTRODUCTION

PAULINE

Pauline, Browning's first published poem, was part—the only part that came to the birth—of a scheme conceived by him on the 22nd October 1832, after seeing Edmund Kean act at Richmond. The date and place were appended to the poem, the latter, no doubt, to assist in preserving its anonymity, since the author's real home at the time was in Camberwell. His account of it (contained in a manuscript note, written five years later, in his own copy of the book) is as follows :—

“The following poem was written in pursuance of a foolish plan which occupied me mightily for a time, and which had for its object the enabling me to assume and realize I know not how many different characters :—meanwhile the world was never to guess that ‘Brown, Smith, Jones and Robinson’ (as the spelling books have it), the respective authors of this poem, the other novel, such an opera, such a speech, etc., etc., were no other than one and the same individual. The present abortion was the first work of the Poet of the batch, who would have been more legitimately myself than most of the others ; but I surrounded him with all manner of (to my then

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notion) poetical accessories, and had planned quite a delightful life for him.

Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Fool's paradise of mine."

The poem was written at a heat—"on one leg," as he expressed it in a letter asking permission to send a copy to Mr. W. J. Fox. The preface is dated January, 1833: and, the money to pay for its publication having been provided by his mother's sister, Mrs. Silverthorne, it was printed by Saunders and Otley, and issued in March of that year. Fox, whose acquaintance Browning had made through Miss Eliza Flower, to whom the young poet was warmly attached, wrote a highly sympathetic notice of it in the *Monthly Repository*, of which he was editor. He also sent a copy to J. S. Mill, who annotated it carefully with a view to an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*; but the editor refused to print it, on the ground that a notice (very brief and contemptuous) had already appeared. Mill's copy of the poem was returned to Browning through Fox, and, after receiving the above-quoted note and other comments, was presumably given by him to Forster; it is now in the Dyce and Forster Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum (see a letter to Dr. Furnivall, 29 August 1881, printed in Mr. T. J. Wise's *Letters of R. Browning*, vol. i. p. 67; second series, vol. ii. p. 32). Specimens of Mill's notes are printed in an article by Miss M. A. Phillips in the *Cornhill Magazine* for May, 1912.

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The poem was a complete failure, so far as sales went, and Browning conceived a great distaste for it, as not merely immature but unhealthy. All the copies were withdrawn from the publishers after a very short time. In 1846 he was extremely unwilling to let Miss Barrett have a sight of it. He omitted it from the collected editions of his poems in 1849 and 1863, and only reluctantly included it in the edition of 1868 (as his preface in that edition testifies) because he had become aware of the existence of transcripts, from which it was to be published abroad. One such transcript, of which he had been informed many years before, was that made in 1850 by D. G. Rossetti, who had come across the poem accidentally, attributed it on internal evidence to the author of *Paracelsus*, and transcribed it in full from the copy in the British Museum. In 1888, when preparing a new (and final) collected edition of his works, Browning revised the poem throughout, not by rewriting any part of it, but by making a large number of small verbal changes, intended to remove solecisms and obscurities and somewhat strengthen the phraseology. It is in this amended form that the poem is printed here.

A reprint of the original edition (few copies of which have survived) was issued by Mr. T. J. Wise in 1886.

The note attached to the date, V.A.XX (*i.e.* *Vixi annos viginti*, "I have lived twenty years") was explained by Browning (letter to T. J. Wise,

INTRODUCTION

November 25, 1886) as referring to the imaginary subject of the poem. It was, however, also his own age at the time of its composition and publication.

“Sun-treader,” in l. 151, is Shelley, the special object of Browning’s devotion in early years. His friend, Joseph Arnould (afterwards Sir Joseph, Judge of the Supreme Court at Bombay), writing to Alfred Domett in 1847, describes *Pauline* as “a strange, wild (in parts singularly magnificent) poet-biography : his own early life as it presented itself to his own soul viewed poetically : in fact, psychologically speaking, his Sartor Resartus : it was written and published three years before *Paracelsus*, when Shelley was his God” (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 141).

PARACELSIUS

PARACELSIUS was suggested to Browning as a subject for a poem by Comte Amédée de Ripert-Monclar, a young French royalist who frequently visited England as an envoy from the Bourbon party in France to their exiled chiefs. Through William Shergold Browning, the poet’s uncle, who was a clerk in the Rothschilds’ Paris house, he was introduced to the Browning family at Camberwell in 1834, and formed a warm friendship with Robert Browning. Long as it is, the poem was rapidly composed, for the dedication to

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Comte Amédée is dated March 15, 1835, and in the preface originally prefixed to it Browning states that it had not been imagined six months before it was finished. Hence it must have been taken in hand after his return to England from his visit to Russia (about March to May, 1834). It was offered in April to Moxon and to Saunders and Otley, but without success, and was eventually published, through the mediation of Mr. W. J. Fox, by Effingham Wilson, at the expense of the poet's father. It was reviewed, with mixed praise and censure, by Leigh Hunt; with commendation by Fox; with warm enthusiasm by John Forster, whose notice of it in the *Examiner* laid the foundation of a long friendship; but the reviews in general were apathetic or contemptuous, and the sales small. Nevertheless the poem did not fall entirely unrecognized, like *Pauline*; it gave Browning a status among the younger poets of the day, so that Miss Barrett in 1844, on her first acquaintance with him, describes him as "Browning, author of *Paracelsus*"; and at the supper, which celebrated the success of Macready's performance of Talfourd's *Ion* on March 26, 1836, he was called upon, as the youngest poet present, to respond for "the Poets of England," in the presence of Wordsworth and Landor.

The original MS. of the poem was given by Browning to Forster, and is now in the Dyce and Forster Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington.

Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus
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INTRODUCTION

von Hohenheim (1493–1541), who took the name of Paracelsus, was a leader in the revolt against the mediæval authority of Aristotle, especially on the side of physical theory. He travelled much, achieved some remarkable cures, and was appointed professor of physic and surgery at Basel. He had a strong leaning to mysticism, and is said to have practised magic and astrology; his enemies called him a quack and a charlatan, his friends the father of modern chemistry and the discoverer of the circulation of the blood. The latest studies of the subject (see Miss A. M. Stoddart's *Life of Paracelsus*, 1911) tend to support the more favourable view of his character, which is that adopted by Browning. Browning's knowledge of him was due to the edition of his works by Bitiskius (1658), of which there was a copy in his father's library, and the preface to which suggested the outlines of his conception and treatment. The outlines are developed, however, with great freedom; and the other characters, Michal, Festus, Aprile, are purely imaginary.

It is worth noting that the passage commencing “I go to prove my soul” (Part I, l. 559) was a favourite with General Charles Gordon.

SORDELLO

In April, 1835, shortly before the publication of *Paracelsus*, Browning speaks of himself, in a letter to W. J. Fox (Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, p. 66)

INTRODUCTION

as having “another affair on hand, rather of a more popular nature.” Whether this refers to the incipient *Sordello* (as Mr. Hall Griffin believed) is uncertain; but there is no doubt that this poem was begun, at latest, in the early months of 1836; was suspended during the composition of *Strafford* (see introduction to that drama); and was taken in hand again after the latter had tempted fortune before the footlights. In the following spring of 1838, Browning determined on a journey to Venice, “to finish my poem among the scenes it describes.” He may have been the more willing to take his time over it, because (as Mr. Hall Griffin pointed out) a long poem on the same subject, by a Mrs. Busk, appeared in the middle of 1837. Going out by sea, and returning by land, he was absent about four months, one of which was spent in Venetia. He “did not write six lines while absent,” and though he had a “fagging fit” on his return, which he expected would finish the poem “in a trice,” it was not until the beginning of 1840 that it actually saw the light. A presentation copy of it was sent to Alfred Domett in New Zealand on “St. Perpetua’s Day” [March 7].

Sordello, like *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*, is a study of a soul, in which, as is natural and almost inevitable in the work of a young poet, there are autobiographic elements. There is a change of form, the poem being neither monologue nor drama, but narrative, and the verse being rhyming couplets instead of blank. There is also a certain

INTRODUCTION

change of style. Some criticism on *Paracelsus* had been interpreted by Browning as implying that his style in that poem was too diffuse. Accordingly in *Sordello* he tried the method of rigid repression,—not of ideas, nor of imagery, but of words ; and the result of this economy of language, operating on an exuberance of thought and metaphor, was a difficulty of comprehension which demands a severe effort of the mind from every reader of the poem.

This difficulty is increased by the unfamiliarity (to most readers) of its setting. Browning wrote in 1863 : “the historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires ; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul” ; but the background selected is an obscure and difficult period of Italian history, which cannot easily be grasped by the reader, while it is so prominent that it cannot be ignored. Sordello, whom Browning employed as the embodiment of the poetic soul whose development he wished to portray, lives in modern memory through the mention made of him by Dante in cantos vi.-ix. of the *Purgatorio*. Historically, he was of small account ; but to Dante he was a precursor in Italian poetry, and, as a Mantuan, a fellow countryman of Virgil ; to Browning, he was a poet soul, who put aside the obvious possibilities of love and worldly greatness, in an attempt to heal the woes of “earth’s immense and trampled multitude,” and who dies without having achieved anything. The historical back-

INTRODUCTION

ground is that of the struggles of the Guelphs and Ghibellines : Eccelino da Romano, the Ghibelline tyrant of Verona ; Taurello Salinguerra, his great soldier ; Cunizza (to whom Browning gives her sister Palma's name), his daughter ; Azzo of Este and Count Richard of San Bonifazio, the Guelph nobles ; and Sordello himself—all these are historical characters ; the siege of Ferrara is a historical event ; and many other historical characters and events play their part in allusions which add much to the difficulty of the poem. But Browning took great liberties with his history. The incident which forms the basis of the narrative, namely the kidnapping and concealment of Salinguerra's infant son, Sordello, by Eccelin's wife Adelaide ; and the experience which forms its spiritual basis, namely, the revelation to Sordello of the miseries, the "warped souls and bodies," of a great part of humanity : these are alike wholly imaginary, as imaginary as Eglamor the poet and Naddo the critic. The historical Sordello had nothing to do with Salinguerra ; there is no reason to suppose that he held any prominent position in Lombard politics ; nor is there any ground for assigning him a humanitarian interest in his fellow men.

These difficulties of style and historical setting naturally militated against the success of the poem, and made a serious set back in Browning's growing reputation. Even Miss Barrett was obliged to admit that "it is like a noble picture with its face to the wall, or at least, in the shadow"

INTRODUCTION

(*Letters of R. Browning and E. B. Barrett*, i. 193), and urged its revision. Such a revision was at that time (1845) contemplated by the poet, but nothing came of it. In 1856 the project of a revision was again taken up (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, ii. 228), and again abandoned. Ultimately the poem was reprinted, with only verbal alterations, and with the addition of an “elucidatory heading” at the top of each page, intended as an aid to comprehension, in the three-volume *Poetical Works* of 1863.

The “English Eyebright,” addressed in 1. 967 of Book III, was Miss Euphrasia Fanny Haworth, an early and intimate friend of the poet, and subsequently an equally warm friend and constant correspondent of his wife (see Mrs. Orr’s *Life*, 1908, p. 91).

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO MY OLD
FRIEND JOHN FORSTER, GLAD AND GRATEFUL
THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST PUBLI-
CATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY IN-
CLUDE, HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTEST AND
STAUNCHEST HELPER, SHOULD SEEM EVEN
NEARER TO ME NOW THAN ALMOST
THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

LONDON: *April 21, 1863.*

THE poems that follow are printed in the order of their publication. The first piece in the series I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity; for not long ago I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad: by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine," which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

R. B.

LONDON : *December 25, 1867.*

I preserve, in order to supplement it, the foregoing preface. I had thought, when compelled

to include in my collected works the poem to which it refers, that the honest course would be to reprint, and leave mere literary errors unaltered. Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient: my faults remain duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where "Pauline" must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology—experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

The poems that follow are again, as before, printed in chronological order; but only so far as proves compatible with the prescribed size of each volume, which necessitates an occasional change in the distribution of its contents. Every date is subjoined as before.

R. B.

LONDON : *February 27, 1888.*

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PORTRAIT

ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 43)

*From the water-colour drawing by D. G. Rossetti (begun in
London and finished at Paris, 1855-1856) now in the
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* FRONTISPICE

PAULINE

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le scaurois jamais être.—MAROT.

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accendent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt. Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalô esse: . . . adeo conscientiæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cœlo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulô, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligent, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosâ sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Praefat.*

LONDON: *January 1833.*

V. A. XX.

[This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment.]

[*Note by R. B., 1888.*]

PAULINE

1833

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,
And loosened hair and breathing lips, and arms
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear ; 5
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-place,
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return
To one so watched, so loved and so secured.
But what can guard thee but thy naked love ? 10
Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned wound
Envenoms his own veins ! Thou art so good,
So calm—if thou shouldst wear a brow less light
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept
From out thy soul as from a sacred star ! 15
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain
To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me ;
Nature would point at one whose quivering lip
Was bathed in her enchantments, whose brow
burned
Beneath the crown to which her secrets knelt, 20
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,
And then departed smiling like a fiend
Who has deceived God,—if such one should seek
Again her altars and stand robed and crowned
Amid the faithful ! Sad confession first, 25

PAULINE

Remorse and pardon and old claims renewed,
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame if I had sat
By thee for ever from the first, in place
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth : 30
No thought nor hope having been shut from thee,
No vague wish unexplained, no wandering aim
Sent back to bind on fancy's wings and seek
Some strange fair world where it might be a law ; 35
But, doubting nothing, had been led by thee,
Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked
Who has slept through a peril. Ah vain, vain !

Thou lovest me ; the past is in its grave
Tho' its ghost haunts us ; still this much is ours, 40
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing
Wait for us in the dark. Thou lovest me ;
And thou art to receive not love but faith,
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile and take
All shapes and shames, and veil without a fear 45
That form which music follows like a slave :
And I look to thee and I trust in thee,
As in a Northern night one looks alway
Unto the East for morn and spring and joy.
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state, 50
And, resting on some few old feelings won
Back by thy beauty, wouldest that I essay
The task which was to me what now thou art :
And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn when winter 55
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills ; the black-thorn
boughs,

PAULINE

So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks 60
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.
I walked with thee who knew'st not a deep shame
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words which
sought
To hide it till they wandered and were mute,
As we stood listening on a sunny mound 65
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
Betrayed by sleep ; until the feeling rushed
That I was low indeed, yet not so low
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes.
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast 70
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating :
And long ere words like a hurt bird's complaint
Bade me look up and be what I had been,
I felt despair could never live by thee :
Thou wilt remember. Thou art not more dear 75
Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung
But as one entering bright halls where all
Will rise and shout for him : sure I must own
That I am fallen, having chosen gifts
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad and fain 80
Would give up all to be but where I was,
Not high as I had been if faithful found,
But low and weak yet full of hope, and sure
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit 85
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love
And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh Pauline, I am ruined who believed
That though my soul had floated from its sphere 90
Of wild dominion into the dim orb

PAULINE

Of self—that it was strong and free as ever !

It has conformed itself to that dim orb,

Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now

Must stay where it alone can be adored.

95

I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which

I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt

A strange delight in causing my decay.

I was a fiend in darkness chained for ever

Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,

100

Till through the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came

A white swan to remain with me ; and ages

Rolled, yet I tired not of my first free joy

In gazing on the peace of its pure wings :

And then I said “ It is most fair to me,

105

“ Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change

“ From the thick darkness, sure its eyes are dim,

“ Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed

“ With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,

“ For it would seem, in light beside its kind,

110

“ Withered, tho’ here to me most beautiful.”

And then I was a young witch whose blue eyes,

As she stood naked by the river springs,

Drew down a god : I watched his radiant form

Growing less radiant, and it gladdened me ;

115

Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine

Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,

He turned to look at me, ere I could lose

The grin with which I viewed his perishing :

And he shrieked and departed and sat long

120

By his deserted throne, but sunk at last

Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled

Around him, “ I am still a god—to thee.”

Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,

Since all the wandering and all the weakness

125

Will be a saddest comment on the song :

PAULINE

And if, that done, I can be young again,
I will give up all gained, as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope or part or care in human kind. 130
As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass
Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,
The morning swallows with their songs like words, 135
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts :
So, aught connected with my early life,
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years ! 140

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,
Had not the glow I felt at His award,
Assured me all was not extinct within :
His whom all honour, whose renown springs up
Like sunlight which will visit all the world, 145
So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,
Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls
From his foul nets which some lit torch invades,
Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.
Thou didst smile, poet, but can we forgive ? 150

Sun-treader, life and light be thine for ever !
Thou art gone from us ; years go by and spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee : they stand, thy majesties, 155
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain. 160

PAULINE

The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them, 165
And with them creatures of my own were mixed,
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
But thou art still for me who have adored
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name
Which I believed a spell to me alone, 170
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men !
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses
cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly—
Joying to see some wandering insect won
To live in its few rushes, or some locust 175
To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air :
And then should find it but the fountain-head,
Long lost, of some great river washing towns 180
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
But by its banks untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change ; 185
Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country—so
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world ! 190
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
That I am not what I have been to thee :
Like a girl one has silently loved long
In her first loneliness in some retreat,
When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view 195

PAULINE

Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bloom
Like a mountain berry : doubtless it is sweet
To see her thus adored, but there have been
Moments when all the world was in our praise,
Sweeter than any pride of after hours.

200

Yet, sun-treader, all hail ! From my heart's heart
I bid thee hail ! E'en in my wildest dreams,
I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
To see thee for a moment as thou art.

205

And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit !
Remember me who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
Could never die. Remember me who flung
All honour from my soul, yet paused and said

210

“There is one spark of love remaining yet,
“For I have nought in common with him, shapes
“Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
“Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind ;
“And though I feel how low I am to him,

215

“Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
“Of harmonies he called profusely up ;
“So, one gleam still remains, although the last.”
Remember me who praise thee e'en with tears,
For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;

220

Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody some wondrous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,
They dream not to essay ; yet it no less
But more is honoured. I was thine in shame,
And now when all thy proud renown is out,
I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star which breaks on him
Altered and worn and weak and full of tears.

PAULINE

Autumn has come like spring returned to us, 230
Won from her girlishness ; like one returned
A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet
With the old smile, but yet so changed and still ! 235
And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
Life's vanity, won by a word again
Into my own life—by one little word
Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me,
Livesstrangelyonmythoughtsandlooksandwords, 240
As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing
Its silent course of quietness and joy.
O dearest, if indeed I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream !
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon 245
Sinks to itself and whispers we shall be
But closer linked, two creatures whom the earth
Bears singly, with strange feelings unrevealed
Save to each other ; or two lonely things
Created by some power whose reign is done, 250
Having no part in God or his bright world.
I am to sing whilst ebbing day dies soft,
As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch. 255
I must not think, lest this new impulse die
In which I trust ; I have no confidence :
So, I will sing on fast as fancies come ;
Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare, whose first elements 260
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth
In infancy, nor as they now exist,
When I am grown above them and can rule—
But in that middle stage when they were full

PAULINE

Yet ere I had disposed them to my will ;
And then I shall show how these elements
Produced my present state, and what it is.

265

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;
And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all :
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create and rule and call
Upon all things to minister to it ;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—
This is myself ; and I should thus have been
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

270

275

280

And of my powers, one springs up to save
From utter death a soul with such desire
Confined to clay—of powers the only one
Which marks me—an imagination which
Has been a very angel, coming not
In fitful visions but beside me ever
And never failing me ; so, though my mind
Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets,
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
The dark past up to quell it regally.

285

290

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star ; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God :
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled

295

PAULINE

With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear : and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens, for I saw God everywhere ;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even his being—e'en the while I felt
His presence, never acted from myself,
Still trusted in a hand to lead me through
All danger ; and this feeling ever fought
Against my weakest reason and resolve.

300

305

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth
Has come the last : but sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

310

These make myself : I have long sought in vain
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,
Yet ever found them mould my wildest youth
Where they alone displayed themselves, converted
All objects to their use : now see their course !

315

They came to me in my first dawn of life
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books
All halo-girt with fancies of my own ;
And I myself went with the tale—a god
Wandering after beauty, or a giant
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter
Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives :
I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those

320

325

330

PAULINE

On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
The deep groves and white temples and wet caves :
And nothing ever will surprise me now—
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair. 335

And strange it is that I who could so dream
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—
Aught low or painful ; but I never doubted :
So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants ; yet strong beneath 340
Was a vague sense of power though folded up—
A sense that, though those shades and times were
past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down
My soul till it was changed. I lost myself, 345
And were it not that I so loathe that loss,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself ; and the effects
In deeds for which remorse were vain as for
The wanderings of delirious dream ; yet thence 350
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, all world's wrong
That spotted me : at length I cleansed my soul.
Yet long world's influence remained ; and nought
But the still life I led, apart once more,
Which left me free to seek soul's old delights, 355
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.

As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit ;
And song rose, no new impulse but the one
With which all others best could be combined.
My life has not been that of those whose heaven 360
Was lampless save where poesy shone out ;
But as a clime where glittering mountain-tops

PAULINE

And glancing sea and forests steeped in light
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;
For music (which is earnest of a heaven,
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed,) is like a voice,
A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer time :
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes 365
Which have made painters pale, and they go on
Till stars look at them and winds call to them
As they leave life's path for the twilight world
Where the dead gather. This was not at first,
For I scarce knew what I would do. I had 370
An impulse but no yearning—only sang. 375

And first I sang as I in dream have seen
Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
Yet singing to herself until it came.

I turned to those old times and scenes where all 380
That 's beautiful had birth for me, and made
Rude verses on them all ; and then I paused—
I had done nothing, so I sought to know
What other minds achieved. No fear outbroke
As on the works of mighty bards I gazed, 385
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, my own fancies justified,
And their aspirings but my very own.
With them I first explored passion and mind,—
All to begin afresh ! I rather sought 390
To rival what I wondered at than form
Creations of my own ; if much was light
Lent by the others, much was yet my own.

I paused again : a change was coming—came :
I was no more a boy, the past was breaking
Before the future and like fever worked. 395

PAULINE

I thought on my new self, and all my powers
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed
On all things: schemes and systems went and came,
And I was proud (being vainest of the weak) 400
In wandering o'er thought's world to seek some one
To be my prize, as if you wandered o'er
The White Way for a star.

And my choice fell

Not so much on a system as a man—
On one, whom praise of mine shall not offend, 405
Who was as calm as beauty, being such
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,—
Believing in them and devoting all
His soul's strength to their winning back to peace ;
Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake, 410
Clothed in all passion's melodies : such first
Caught me and set me, slave of a sweet task,
To disentangle, gather sense from song :
Since, song-inwoven, lurked there words which
seemed
A key to a new world, the muttering 415
Of angels, something yet unguessed by man.
How my heart leapt as still I sought and found
Much there, I felt my own soul had conceived,
But there living and burning ! Soon the orb
Of his conceptions dawned on me ; its praise 420
Lives in the tongues of men, men's brows are high
When his name means a triumph and a pride,
So, my weak voice may well forbear to shame
What seemed decreed my fate : I threw myself
To meet it, I was vowed to liberty, 425
Men were to be as gods and earth as heaven,
And I—ah, what a life was mine to prove !
My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,
I shall go mad, if I recall that time !

PAULINE

Oh let me look back ere I leave for ever
The time which was an hour one fondly waits
For a fair girl that comes a withered hag !
And I was lonely, far from woods and fields,
And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
As a stag ; yet I was full of bliss, who lived
With Plato and who had the key to life ;
And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
And many a thought did I build up on thought,
As the wild bee hangs cell to cell ; in vain,
For I must still advance, no rest for mind.

430

435

440

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
The life all new to me ; my theories
Were firm, so them I left, to look and learn
Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes and joys ;
And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought
How best life's end might be attained—an end
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

445

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke
As from a dream : I said " 'Twas beautiful,
" Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it ! "
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
Strange towers and high-walled gardens thick with
trees,

450

Where song takes shelter and delicious mirth
From laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
And on the morrow when he comes to lie
For ever 'neath those garden-trees fruit-flushed
Sung round by fairies, all his search is vain.
First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,
Next—faith in them, and then in freedom's self
And virtue's self, then my own motives, ends
And aims and loves, and human love went last.
I felt this no decay, because new powers

455

460

PAULINE

Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,
Light-heartedness ; for I had oft been sad,
Mistrusting my resolves, but now I cast
Hope joyously away : I laughed and said
“No more of this !” I must not think : at length
I looked again to see if all went well.

465

My powers were greater : as some temple seemed
My soul, where nought is changed and incense rolls 470
Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.
So, I passed through the temple and to me
Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried “Hail,
king !

“ We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more ! 475
“ Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee ! ”
And I said “ Are ye strong ? Let fancy bear me
“ Far from the past ! ” And I was borne away,
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being calm. 480
And I said “ I have nursed up energies,
“ They will prey on me.” And a band knelt low
And cried “ Lord, we are here and we will make
“ Safe way for thee in thine appointed life !
“ But look on us ! ” And I said “ Ye will worship 485
“ Me ; should my heart not worship too ? ” They
shouted

“ Thyself, thou art our king ! ” So, I stood there
Smiling—oh, vanity of vanities !
For buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
With which I looked out how to end my course ; 490
I felt once more myself, my powers—all mine ;
I knew while youth and health so lifted me
That, spite of all life's nothingness, no grief
Came nigh me, I must ever be light-hearted ;
And that this knowledge was the only veil

495

PAULINE

Betwixt joy and despair : so, if age came,
I should be left—a wreck linked to a soul
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken and aware
Of my decay. So a long summer morn
Found me ; and ere noon came, I had resolved 500
No age should come on me ere youth was spent,
For I would wear myself out, like that morn
Which wasted not a sunbeam ; every hour
I would make mine, and die.

And thus I sought
To chain my spirit down which erst I freed 505
For flights to fame : I said “The troubled life
“Of genius, seen so gay when working forth
“Some trusted end, grows sad when all proves
vain—
“ How sad when men have parted with truth’s peace
“ For falsest fancy’s sake, which waited first 510
“ As an obedient spirit when delight
“ Came without fancy’s call : but alters soon,
“ Comes darkened, seldom, hastens to depart,
“ Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.
“ But I shall never lose her ; she will live 515
“ Dearer for such seclusion. I but catch
“ A hue, a glance of what I sing : so, pain
“ Is linked with pleasure, for I ne’er may tell
“ Half the bright sights which dazzle me ; but now
“ Mine shall be all the radiance : let them fade 520
“ Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast !
“ And when all’s done, the few dim gleams trans-
ferred,”—
(For a new thought sprang up how well it were,
Discarding shadowy hope, to weave such lays
As straight encircle men with praise and love, 525
So, I should not die utterly,—should bring
One branch from the gold forest, like the knight

PAULINE

Of old tales, witnessing I had been there)—

“And when all’s done, how vain seems e’en success—

“The vaunted influence poets have o’er men !

530

“T is a fine thing that one weak as myself

“Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words

“He utters in his solitude shall move

“Men like a swift wind—that tho’ dead and gone,

“New eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams

535

“Of love come true in happier frames than his.

“Ay, the still night brings thoughts like these,
but morn

“Comes and the mockery again laughs out

“At hollow praises, smiles allied to sneers ;

“And my soul’s idol ever whispers me

540

“To dwell with him and his unhonoured song :

“And I foreknow my spirit, that would press

“First in the struggle, fail again to make

“All bow enslaved, and I again should sink.

“And then know that this curse will come on us, 545

“To see our idols perish ; we may wither,

“No marvel, we are clay, but our low fate

“Should not extend to those whom trustingly

“We sent before into time’s yawning gulf

“To face what dread may lurk in darkness there. 550

“To find the painter’s glory pass, and feel

“Music can move us not as once, or, worst,

“To weep decaying wits ere the frail body

“Decays ! Nought makes me trust some love is
true,

“But the delight of the contented lowness

555

“With which I gaze on him I keep for ever

“Above me ; I to rise and rival him ?

“Feed his fame rather from my heart’s best blood,

“Wither unseen that he may flourish still.”

PAULINE

Pauline, my soul's friend, thou dost pity yet 560
How this mood swayed me when that soul found
thine,

When I had set myself to live this life,
Defying all past glory. Ere thou camest
I seemed defiant, sweet, for old delights
Had flocked like birds again ; music, my life, 565
Nourished me more than ever ; then the lore
Loved for itself and all it shows—that king
Treading the purple calmly to his death,
While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,
The giant shades of fate, silently flitting, 570
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom ;
And him sitting alone in blood while friends
Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and the boy
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls
Streaked with his mother's blood, but striving hard 575
To tell his story ere his reason goes.

And when I loved thee as love seemed so oft,
Thou lovedst me indeed : I wondering searched
My heart to find some feeling like such love,
Believing I was still much I had been. 580
Too soon I found all faith had gone from me,
And the late glow of life, like change on clouds,
Proved not the morn-blush widening into day,
But eve faint-coloured by the dying sun
While darkness hastens quickly. I will tell 585
My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair
Cannot come near us—this it is, my state.

Souls alter not, and mine must still advance ;
Strange that I knew not, when I flung away
My youth's chief aims, their loss might lead to loss 590
Of what few I retained, and no resource
Be left me : for behold how changed is all !
I cannot chain my soul : it will not rest

PAULINE

In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere :
It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
Which nowise I account for nor explain,
But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
All feelings equally, to hear all sides :
How can my life indulge them ? yet they live,
Referring to some state of life unknown.

595

600

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for
All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, grows pain ;
I envy—how I envy him whose soul
Turns its whole energies to some one end,
To elevate an aim, pursue success
However mean ! So, my still baffled hope
Seeks out abstractions ; I would have one joy,
But one in life, so it were wholly mine,
One rapture all my soul could fill : and this
Wild feeling places me in dream afar
In some vast country where the eye can see
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
With shining towers and towns, till I grow mad
Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds
Some pleasure, while my soul could grasp the world,
But must remain this vile form's slave. I look
With hope to age at last, which quenching much,
May let me concentrate what sparks it spares.

605

610

615

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge : the sole proof
Of yet commanding will is in that power
Repressed ; for I beheld it in its dawn,
The sleepless harpy with just-budding wings,
And I considered whether to forego
All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live,
Finding a recompense in its wild eyes.
And when I found that I should perish so,

620

625

PAULINE

I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever,
And I am left alone with old delights ;
See ! it lies in me a chained thing, still prompt
To serve me if I loose its slightest bond :
I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

630

How should this earth's life prove my only sphere ?

Can I so narrow sense but that in life

635

Soul still exceeds it ? In their elements

My love outsoars my reason ; but since love

Perforce receives its object from this earth

While reason wanders chainless, the few truths

Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell

640

Love chained below ; then what were love, set free,

Which, with the object it demands, would pass

Reason companioning the seraphim ?

No, what I feel may pass all human love

Yet fall far short of what my love should be.

645

And yet I seem more warped in this than aught,

Myself stands out more hideously : of old

I could forget myself in friendship, fame,

Liberty, nay, in love of mightier souls ;

But I begin to know what thing hate is—

650

To sicken and to quiver and grow white—

And I myself have furnished its first prey.

Hate of the weak and ever-wavering will,

The selfishness, the still-decaying frame . . .

But I must never grieve whom wing can waft

655

Far from such thoughts—as now. Andromeda !

And she is with me : years roll, I shall change,

But change can touch her not—so beautiful

With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair

Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,

660

And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,

Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,

As she awaits the snake on the wet beach

PAULINE

By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking
At her feet ; quite naked and alone ; a thing

665

I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
To save will come in thunder from the stars.

Let it pass ! Soul requires another change.
I will be gifted with a wondrous mind,

Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life, yet only so

670

As to call up their fears ; and there shall come
A time requiring youth's best energies ;

And lo, I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
And rise triumphant, triumph through decay.

675

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all I fain would be :
But then to know nothing, to hope for nothing,
To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear
Lest, losing them, all 's lost and nought remains !

680

There 's some vile jugglery with my reason here ;
I feel I but explain to my own loss

These impulses : they live no less the same.
Liberty ! what though I despair ? my blood

685

Rose never at a slave's name proud as now.

Oh sympathies, obscured by sophistries !—
Why else have I sought refuge in myself,

But from the woes I saw and could not stay ?
Love ! is not this to love thee, my Pauline ?

690

I cherish prejudice, 'lest I be left

Utterly loveless ? witness my belief

In poets, though sad change has come there too ;
No more I leave myself to follow them—

Unconsciously I measure me by them—

Let me forget it : and I cherish most

695

My love of England—how her name, a word
Of hers in a strange tongue makes my heart beat !

PAULINE

Pauline, could I but break the spell ! Not now—
All 's fever—but when calm shall come again,
I am prepared : I have made life my own.

700

I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel, but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture, I have lived all life
When it is most alive, where strangest fate
New-shapes it past surmise—the throes of men
Bit by some curse or in the grasps of doom

705

Half-visible and still-increasing round,
Or crowning their wide being's general aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,

As one breathing his weakness to the ear

710

Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower,

A slight flower growing alone, and offering

Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,

Yet joyous and confiding like the triumph

Of a child : and why am I not worthy thee ?

715

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze

Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,

Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,

Or open in the night of sounds, to look

For the dim stars ; I can mount with the bird

720

Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves

And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,

Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens ;

Or like a fish breathe deep the morning air

In the misty sun-warm water ; or with flower

725

And tree can smile in light at the sinking sun

Just as the storm comes, as a girl would look

On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me, see how I could build
A home for us, out of the world, in thought !

730

I am uplifted : fly with me, Pauline !

PAULINE

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
Between the sullen river and the woods

Waving and muttering, for the moonless night

Has shaped them into images of life,

735

Like the uprising of the giant-ghosts,

Looking on earth to know how their sons fare :

Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell

Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting

Of thy soft breasts. No, we will pass to morning— 740

Morning, the rocks and valleys and old woods.

How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,

Half in the air, like creatures of the place,

Trusting the element, living on high boughs

That swing in the wind—look at the silver spray 745

Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract

Amid the broken rocks ! Shall we stay here

With the wild hawks ? No, ere the hot noon come,

Dive we down—safe ! See this our new retreat

Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,

750

Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping down

To a small pool whose waters lie asleep

Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants :

And tall trees overarch to keep us in,

Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,

755

And in the dreamy water one small group

Of two or three strange trees are got together

Wondering at all around, as strange beasts herd

Together far from their own land : all wildness,

No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all, 760

And tongues of bank go shelving in the lymph,

Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,

And old grey stones lie making eddies there,

The wild-mice cross them dry-shod. Deeper in !

Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in ! 765

This is the very heart of the woods all round

Mountain-like heaped above us ; yet even here

PAULINE

One pond of water gleams ; far off the river
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one—
One thin clear sheet has overleaped and wound 770
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies
Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
And through their roots long creeping plants out-
stretch

Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on, 775
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined
To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread,
It winds, all noiselessly through the deep wood
Till thro' a cleft-way, thro' the moss and stone,
It joins its parent-river with a shout. 780

Up for the glowing day, leave the old woods !
See, they part like a ruined arch : the sky !
Nothing but sky appears, so close the roots
And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats laden 785
With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight! 790
Water is beautiful, but not like air :
See, where the solid azure waters lie
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks like a forest spread themselves
As though each pore could feel the element ; 795
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way,
Float with me there, Pauline !—but not like air.

Down the hill ! Stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rock, which look o'er the far plain :
So, envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest 800

PAULINE

And peer from their spread boughs ; wide they
wave, looking

At the muleteers who whistle on their way,
To the merry chime of morning bells, past all
The little smoking cots, mid fields and banks
And copses bright in the sun. My spirit wanders : 805
Hedgerows for me—those living hedgerows where
The bushes close and clasp above and keep
Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;
But my soul saddens when it looks beyond :
I cannot be immortal, taste all joy.

810

O God, where do they tend—these struggling aims ?¹
What would I have ? What is this “sleep” which
seems

To bound all ? can there be a “waking” point
Of crowning life ? The soul would never rule ;
It would be first in all things, it would have

815

¹ Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment, mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux coordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre, celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ébaucher. Ce début sans prétention, ce remuvement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même, et par-dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit tout particulière de mon ami, rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu. Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakespeare, de Rafaelle, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception qu'à leur mise en exécution : j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami, et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci ; mais que faire ?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme, ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'atteindre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée, que je ne sais pas parfaitement, lui est peut-être aussi inintelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

PAULINE

Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that complete,
Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.

The last point I can trace is—rest beneath
Some better essence than itself, in weakness ;
This is “myself,” not what I think should be : 820
And what is that I hunger for but God ?

My God, my God, let me for once look on thee
As though nought else existed, we alone !

And as creation crumbles, my soul’s spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from myself 825
I need thee and I feel thee and I love thee.
I do not plead my rapture in thy works
For love of thee, nor that I feel as one
Who cannot die : but there is that in me
Which turns to thee, which loves or which should
love.

830

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress ?

Why have I laboured to put out my life ?

Is it not in my nature to adore,
And e’en for all my reason do I not
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him—now ? 835
Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .

O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed !

I have denied thee calmly—do I not

Pant when I read of thy consummate power, 840
And burn to see thy calm pure truths out-flash
The brightest gleams of earth’s philosophy ?

Do I not shake to hear aught question thee ?

If I am erring save me, madden me,

Take from me powers and pleasures, let me die 845
Ages, so I see thee ! I am knit round

As with a charm by sin and lust and pride,

Yet though my wandering dreams have seen all
shapes

PAULINE

Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,
Or witnessing thine outburst from the tomb.

850

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering and poverty and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved.

855

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever !
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Desert me, and old shades are gathering fast ;
Yet while the last light waits, I would say much,
This chiefly, it is gain that I have said
Somewhat of love I ever felt for thee
But seldom told ; our hearts so beat together
That speech seemed mockery ; but when dark
hours come,

860

And joy departs, and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove,

865

Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which through thee I began, which thus I end,

Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
How I am thine, and more than ever now

That I sink fast : yet though I deeper sink,
No less song proves one word has brought me bliss,

870

Another still may win bliss surely back.

Thou knowest, dear, I could not think all calm,
For fancies followed thought and bore me off,

And left all indistinct ; ere one was caught
Another glanced ; so, dazzled by my wealth,

875

I knew not which to leave nor which to choose,

PAULINE

For all so floated, nought was fixed and firm.
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life.
And so thou bad'st me shadow this first stage. 885
'T is done, and even now I recognize
The shift, the change from last to past—discern
Faintly how life is truth and truth is good.
And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now
In the dim hush of night, that I have done, 890
Despite the sad forebodings, love looks through—
Whispers,—E'en at the last I have her still,
With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven
When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,
And clouds float white above like broods of swans. 895
How the blood lies upon her cheek, outspread
As thinned by kisses ! only in her lips
It wells and pulses like a living thing,
And her neck looks like marble misted o'er
With love-breath,—a Pauline from heights above, 900
Stooping beneath me, looking up—one look
As I might kill her and be loved the more.

So, love me—me, Pauline, and nought but me,
Never leave loving ! Words are wild and weak,
Believe them not, Pauline ! I stained myself 905
But to behold thee purer by my side,
To show thou art my breath, my life, a last
Resource, an extreme want : never believe
Aught better could so look on thee ; nor seek
Again the world of good thoughts left for mine ! 910
There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,
Each equal in their radiant course ; there were
Clusters of far fair isles which ocean kept
For his own joy, and his waves broke on them
Without a choice ; and there was a dim crowd
Of visions, each a part of some grand whole : 915

PAULINE

And one star left his peers and came with peace
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him ;
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
And the crew wandered in its bowers and plucked 920
Its fruits and gave up all their hopes of home ;
And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
And he said, "I am singled out by God,
" No sin must touch me." Words are wild and
weak,
But what they would express is,—Leave me not, 925
Still sit by me with beating breast and hair
Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,
Turning my books or kissing me when I
Look up—like summer wind ! Be still to me
A help to music's mystery which mind fails 930
To fathom, its solution, no mere clue !
O reason's pedantry, life's rule prescribed !
I hopeless, I the loveless, hope and love.
Wiser and better, know me now, not when
You loved me as I was. Smile not ! I have 935
Much yet to dawn on you, to gladden you.

No more of the past ! I'll look within no more.
I have too trusted my own lawless wants,
Too trusted my vain self, vague intuition—
Draining soul's wine alone in the still night, 940
And seeing how, as gathering films arose,
As by an inspiration life seemed bare
And grinning in its vanity, while ends
Foul to be dreamed of, smiled at me as fixed
And fair, while others changed from fair to foul 945
As a young witch turns an old hag at night.
No more of this ! We will go hand in hand,
I with thee, even as a child—love's slave,
Looking no farther than his liege commands.

PAULINE

And thou hast chosen where this life shall be : 950
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,
Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes
And snow-swathed mountains and vast pines begirt
With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,
Suffering none to view her but a race 955
Or stinted or deformed, like the mute dwarfs
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the heavens are thick
With storm) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird 960
Which crieth as it flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights ;
Or I will read great lays to thee—how she,
The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave
With power to love and to be loved and live : 965
Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead, to call and to awake,
Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave : only leaving all, 970
That tells of the past doubt. So, when spring
comes
With sunshine back again like an old smile,
And the fresh waters and awakened birds
And budding woods await us, I shall be
Prepared, and we will question life once more, 975
Till its old sense shall come renewed by change,
Like some clear thought which harsh words
veiled before ;
Feeling God loves us, and that all which errs
Is but a dream which death will dissipate.
And then what need of longer exile ? Seek 980
My England, and, again there, calm approach
All I once fled from, calmly look on those
The works of my past weakness, as one views

PAULINE

Some scene where danger met him long before.
Ah that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

985

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,
And though ere the cold morning all be gone,
As it may be ;—tho' music wait to wile,
And strange eyes and bright wine lure, laugh like
sin

Which steals back softly on a soul half saved,
And I the first deny, decry, despise,
With this avowal, these intents so fair,—
Still be it all my own, this moment's pride !
No less I make an end in perfect joy.

990

E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
Possessed me : I well knew my weak resolves,
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
Over its treasure, as one half afraid
To make his riches definite : but now
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless care
Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some new
And undreamed end reveal itself too late :
For this song shall remain to tell for ever
That when I lost all hope of such a change,

1000

Suddenly beauty rose on me again.
No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, who thus again was visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
And, though this weak soul sink and darkness
whelm,

1005

Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
To where I clearlier see and better love,
As I again go o'er the tracts of thought
Like one who has a right, and I shall live
With poets, calmer, purer still each time,
And beauteous shapes will come for me to seize,

1015

PAULINE

And unknown secrets will be trusted me
Which were denied the waverer once ; but now
I shall be priest and prophet as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth 1020
And love ; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee !
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom 1025
If such must come, but chiefly when I die,
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant : but live thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me !
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me
Know my last state is happy, free from doubt 1030
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well.

RICHMOND :
October 22, 1832.

PARACELSIUS

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

LONDON: *March 15, 1835.*

PERSONS

AUREOLUS PARACELsus, *a student*
FESTUS and MICHAL, *his friends*
APRILE, *an Italian poet*

PARACELSIUS

1835

PART I

PARACELSIUS ASPIRES

SCENE.—*Würzburg; a garden in the environs.* 1512

FESTUS, PARACELSIUS, MICHAL

Paracelsus. Come close to me, dear friends ; still
closer ; thus !

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.

Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !

For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget
All fitful strange and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends !

—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, “this autumn was a pleasant time,”
For some few sunny days ; and overlook

Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
 Autumn would fain be sunny ; I would look
 Liker my nature's truth : and both are frail,
 And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Michal.

Aureole !

Paracelsus. Drop by drop ! she is weeping like
 a child !

Not so ! I am content—more than content ;

Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute

25

Appeal to sympathy for its decay :

Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less

Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow
 down,

Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,

That apple-tree with a rare after-birth

30

Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among !

Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved

Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,

So proud it wears its berries ? Ah, at length,

The old smile meet for her, the lady of this

35

Sequestered nest !—this kingdom, limited

Alone by one old populous green wall

Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,

Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,

Each family of the silver-threaded moss—

40

Which, look through near, this way, and it appears

A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh

Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !

Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,

Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,

45

Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,

Travelling to see the glossy balls high up

Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Michal. In truth we have lived carelessly and well.

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair !—each,
 trust me, born

50

For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
 Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
 Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
 And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay : that plant 55
 Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
 As a queen's languid and imperial arm
 Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
 Shall be reminded to predict to me
 Some great success ! Ah see, the sun sinks broad
 Behind Saint Saviour's : wholly gone, at last ! 60

Festus. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering
 eyes awhile !

You are ours to-night, at least; and while you spoke
 Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
 Could willing leave what he so seemed to love :
 But that last look destroys my dream—that look 65
 As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
 How far was Würzburg with its church and spire
 And garden-walls and all things they contain,
 From that look's far alighting ?

Paracelsus. I but spoke
 And looked alike from simple joy to see 70
 The beings I love best, shut in so well
 From all rude chances like to be my lot,
 That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
 To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
 Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words,— 75
 Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
 Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
 Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
 And fashion even a wish in their behalf
 Beyond what they possess already here ; 80
 But, unobstructed, may at once forget
 Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
 Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
 Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,

One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
 Too filled with airy hopes to make account
 Of soft delights his own heart garners up :
 Whereas behold how much our sense of all
 That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus learns
 That every common pleasure of the world
 Affects me as himself ; that I have just
 As varied appetite for joy derived
 From common things ; a stake in life, in short,
 Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
 That life affords not, would as soon destroy ;—
 He may convince himself that, this in view,
 I shall act well advised. And last, because,
 Though heaven and earth and all things were at
 stake,

85

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.

Festus. True : and the eve is deepening, and
 we sit

100

As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could hint of it
 As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by fits
 (Trithemius busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half-frightened by the awful tomes around ;
 Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
 From even-blush to midnight : but, to-morrow !
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
 We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
 'T is the last night, dear Aureole !

105

Paracelsus. Oh, say on !
 Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
 To be performed for you : say on ! If night
 Be spent the while, the better ! Recall how oft
 My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears

110

115

Have—never wearied you, oh no!—as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now,
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us;
 And still increasing to this night which ends
 My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day
 You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!

120

Festus. In truth? 'T is for my proper peace,
 indeed,

125

Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
 To stay your course: I said my latest hope
 Is fading even now. A story tells

Of some far embassy despatched to win
 The favour of an eastern king, and how
 The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
 Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.

130

Just so, the value of repose and love,
 I meant should tempt you, better far than I
 You seem to comprehend; and yet desist
 No whit from projects where repose nor love
 Has part.

135

Paracelsus. Once more? Alas! As I foretold.

Festus. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
 To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it
 you wish?

140

That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
 Reject God's great commission, and so die!
 You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
 Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
 And patient cherishing of the self-same spirit
 It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
 To stay the lusty manhood of the child
 Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
 Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank

145

150

From aught which marked me out apart from men :
 I would have lived their life, and died their death,
 Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :
 But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
 Taught me to know mankind and know myself ; 155
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
 Now that I touch the brink of my design,
 When I would have a triumph in their eyes, 160
 A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
 And Festus ponders gravely !

Festus.

When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .

Paracelsus.

Hear it ? I can say

Beforehand all this evening's conference !

'T is this way, Michal, that he uses : first, 165

Or he declares, or I, the leading points

Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end

And what God's will ; no two faiths e'er agreed

As his with mine. Next, each of us allows

Faith should be acted on as best we may ; 170

Accordingly, I venture to submit

My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing

The path which God's will seems to authorize.

Well, he discerns much good in it, avows

This motive worthy, that hope plausible, 175

A danger here to be avoided, there

An oversight to be repaired : in fine

Our two minds go together—all the good

Approved by him, I gladly recognize,

All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,

And nought forbids my looking up at last

For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.

When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ

PART I

PARACELSUS

Of failure in my scheme ; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were ;
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most ;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

185

190

Michal. Is it so, Festus? He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Paracelsus. Reject those glorious visions of
God's love

And man's design ; laugh loud that God should
send

105

Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know

Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it.
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Festus.

That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it?—for his sake, not yours? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.

205

Paracelsus. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success. 2

210

Festus. Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet

A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
 Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
 To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
 Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !
 You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought—
 Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
 Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain ;
 But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
 And fragments I must venture what remains.

Michal. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should
 scorn . . .

Festus. Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak
 guardedly

And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
 This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
 No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.

Not from your own confiding words alone
 Am I aware your passionate heart long since
 Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures
 This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
 Where I was born your elder by some years
 Only to watch you fully from the first :

In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
 Even then—'t was mine to have you in my view

As you had your own soul and those intents
 Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
 With a tumultuous heart, you left with me

Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
 Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
 A portion of his lore : and not one youth
 Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
 Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,
 To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve

By patient toil a wide renown like his.

Now, this new ardour which supplants the old
 I watched, too ; 't was significant and strange,

In one matched to his soul's content at length
 With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize, 250
 To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
 From contest, the transition to repose—
 From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
 To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
 The dull stagnation of a soul, content, 255
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretence
 Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
 Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
 What it professed to praise—though not so well 260
 Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
 Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
 That ostentatious show of past defeat,
 That ready acquiescence in contempt,
 I deemed no other than the letting go 265
 His shivered sword, of one about to spring
 Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not thus :
 Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
 For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
 That you prepared to task to the uttermost 270
 Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
 Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
 Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize 275
 In place of many,—the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
 —That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the past,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all 280
 You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW :
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,

Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
 Shall its reward be, not an alien end
 Blending therewith ; no hope nor fear nor joy
 Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray :

285

Thus you aspire.

Paracelsus. You shall not state it thus :
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this
 My ready answer to the will of God
 Who summons me to be his organ. All
 Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
 No better than the sages.

290

295

Festus. Such the aim, then,
 God sets before you ; and 't is doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise
 Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And hold such praise is best attained when man
 Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.

300

305

Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as he wills shall gather
 Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
 Valued perchance ! He seeks not that his altars
 Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.

310

Suppose this, then ; that God selected you
 To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith
 Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)

I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope ; nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success, make destiny

315

Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search

Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Paracelsus [after a pause]. No, I have nought
to fear! Who will may know

The secret workings of my soul. What though
It be so?—if indeed the strong desire 330
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving 335
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless irresistible force 340
That works within me? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses?—still less,
To disregard their promptings! What should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God 345
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns im-
part!

Ask the geier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky !

Be sure they sleep not whom God needs ! Nor
fear

Their holding light his charge, when every hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.

This for the faith in which I trust ; and hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts

355

These pedants strive to learn and teach ; Black
Arts,

Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—
Let others prize : too intimate a tie

Connects me with our God ! A sullen fiend

360

To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites

To help me—what are these, at best, beside
God helping, God directing everywhere,

So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,

And every object there be charged to strike,

365

Teach, gratify her master God appoints ?

And I am young, my Festus, happy and free !

I can devote myself ; I have a life

To give ; I, singled out for this, the One !

Think, think ! the wide East, where all Wisdom
sprung ;

370

The bright South, where she dwelt ; the hopeful
North,

All are passed o'er—it lights on me ! 'T is time

New hopes should animate the world, new light

Should dawn from new revealings to a race

Weighed down so long, forgotten so long ; thus
shall

375

The heaven reserved for us at last receive

Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,

But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze

Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,

Not seldom glorified their life below.

380

Festus. My words have their old fate and make
faint stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example?—seeking there 385
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent
 —So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill 390
 Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
 Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
 Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted force,
 As at old games the runner snatched the torch 395
 From runner still: this way success might be.
 But you have coupled with your enterprise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
 What books are in the desert? Writes the sea 400
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
 Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced, 405
 Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
 Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay,
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it came: 410
 Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
 Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept, 415
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
 Thick like a glory round the Stagirite

Your rivals throng, the sages : here stand you !
 Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not
 Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
420
 You would collect all help from every source—
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Paracelsus. What shall I say ?
 Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
425
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current : this but ill
 Expresses what would I convey : but rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
430
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then

What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
 At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
 Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
435
 Coming and going all the while—till dawned
 His true time's advent ; and could then record
 The words they spokewho kept watch by his bed,—
 Then I might tell more of the breath so light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
440
 Among my hair. Youth is confused ; yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
 And having this within me and about me

445
 While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and woods
 Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
 When life grew plain, and I firstviewed the thronged,
 The everlasting concourse of mankind !

Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
450
 The purpose of the pageant, or the place
 Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,

Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'T was then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all.

455

And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die
Or elevate myself far, far above

The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice

460

In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning

Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep :

465

Vet never to be mixed with men so much

Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise.

150

I would withdraw from their unceas'd praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe

Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;

475

When all the swarthy race press round to kiss

His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
His realm : and he points, smiling, to his scarf

480

Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet

Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
Where these must be displayed!

Festus.

Good; let us hear

No more about your nature, "which first shrank

"From all that marked you out apart from men!"

485

Paracelsus. I touch on that; these words but analyse

The first mad impulse : 't was as brief as fond,
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye. 490
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts :—"Behold the clue
 "To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine
 "To do, these have accomplished : we are peers.
 "They know and therefore rule : I, too, will
 know!"

495

You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
 Would satiate my cravings when obtained, 500
 But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
 And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
 Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
 A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
 Or staggered only at his own vast wits ; 505
 While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
 Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
 That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself
 As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
 A mighty power was brooding, taking shape 510
 Within me ; and this lasted till one night
 When, as I sat revolving it and more,
 A still voice from without said—"Seest thou not,
 "Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss ?
 "Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou
 gazed

515

"Presumptuously on wisdom's countenance,
 "No veil between ; and can thy faltering hands,
 "Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
 "Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
 "Whom radiance ne'er distracted ? Live their life 520

" If thou wouldest share their fortune, choose their eyes

" Unfed by splendour. Let each task present

" Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts

" In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,

" But have some idol of thine own to dress

525

" With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,

" But to become a star to men for ever ;

" Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,

" The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds :

" Look one step onward, and secure that step ! " 530

And I smiled as one never smiles but once,

Then first discovering my own aim's extent,

Which sought to comprehend the works of God,

And God himself, and all God's intercourse

With the human mind ; I understood, no less, 535

My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,

But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.

And softer came the voice—" There is a way :

" 'T is hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued

" With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first 540

" Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength :

" Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,

" Apart from all reward ? " And last it breathed—

" Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,

" Be sure, even to the end ! "—I answered not, 545

Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued

With comprehension and a steadfast will ;

And when he ceased, my brow was sealed his own.

If there took place no special change in me,

How comes it all things wore a different hue 550

Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence,

Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate ?

So that when, quailing at the mighty range

Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste

To contemplate undazzled some one truth, 555

PARACELSIUS

PART I

Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !

I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

560

Michal. Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !

Festus. Just thus you help me ever. This would
 hold

Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
 Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
 You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
 But they were famous in their day—the proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

570

Paracelsus. Their light ! the sum of all is
 briefly this :

They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits 575
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
 Given over to a blind and endless strife
 With evils, what of all their lore abates ?
 No ; I reject and spurn them utterly
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed
 eye,

580

While in the distance heaven is blue above
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

Festus. And yet

As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.

Men have set out as gallantly to seek

Their ruin. I have heard of such : yourself

Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

585

Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint

Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?

Paracelsus. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?

For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance 59:
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories, as now, when once more seems
The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

60c

60:

Festus. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
That clear belief ? I will divest all fear.

Michal. Then Aureole is God's commissary !
he shall

Be great and grand—and all for us !

Paracelsus. No, sweet ! 61c

Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'T is well ; but there our intercourse must end :
I never will be served by those I serve.

Festus. Look well to this ; here is a plague-spot, here,

Disguise it how you may ! 'T is true, you utter 61:
This scorn while by our side and loving us ;
'T is but a spot as yet : but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.

How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love ?

620

It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought ; I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be
That popular praise would little instigate

625

Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph : still you must retain

630

Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched

635

By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
They should ward off fate's envy—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.

If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

640

Michal. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
Do you not feel this ? Say that you feel this !

645

Paracelsus. I feel 't is pleasant that my aims,
at length

Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
My course allures for its own sake, its sole
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine

650

Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.

Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak" :
If weak, more need to give myself entire

To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .

No matter ! I deny myself but little

655

In waiving all assistance save its own.

Would there were some real sacrifice to make !

Your friends the sages threw their joys away,

While I must be content with keeping mine.

Festus. But do not cut yourself from human
weal !

660

You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect

To spend his life in service to his kind

For no reward of theirs, unbound to them

By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—

There are strange punishments for such. Give up 665

(Although no visible good flow thence) some part

Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,

Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.

Say, say almost to God—" I have done all

" For her, not for myself ! "

Paracelsus. And who but lately 670

Was to rejoice in my success like you ?

Whom should I love but both of you ?

Festus. I know not :

But know this, you, that 't is no will of mine

You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;

And this the cause—I can no longer seek

675

To overlook the truth, that there would be

A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,

Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :

—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !

You are endowed with faculties which bear

680

Annexed to them as 't were a dispensation

To summon meaner spirits to do their will

And gather round them at their need ; inspiring

Such with a love themselves can never feel,

Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.

685

I know not if you joy in this or no,

Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste 690
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
 An eating brand, a shame. I dare not judge you.
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside, 695
 There 's no alternative—I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
 'T is best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .
Michal. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those hopes
 away, 700

And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,
 Man should be humble ; you are very proud :
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such
 —Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
 No slow defeat, but a complete success : 705
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Paracelsus [after a pause]. Are these the barren
 firstfruits of my quest ?

Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
 How many years of pain might one such hour
 O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus, 710
 What shall I say, if not that I desire
 To justify your love ; and will, dear friends,
 In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
 See, the great moon ! and ere the mottled owls
 Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems 715
 You acquiesce at last in all save this—
 If I am like to compass what I seek
 By the untried career I choose ; and then,
 If that career, making but small account
 Of much of life's delight, will yet retain 720

Sufficient to sustain my soul : for thus
 I understand these fond fears just expressed.
 And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect,
 The labours and the precepts of old time,
 I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends, 725
 Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
 There is an inmost centre in us all,
 Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in, 730
 This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
 Binds it, and makes all error : and to KNOW
 Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape, 735
 Than in effecting entry for a light
 Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
 The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
 And you trace back the effluence to its spring
 And source within us ; where broods radiance vast, 740
 To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
 Shall favour : chance—for hitherto, your sage
 Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
 As little knows he what unlocks their fount :
 And men have oft grown old among their books 745
 To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
 Whose careless youth had promised what long years
 Of unremitting labour ne'er performed :
 While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
 To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free 750
 As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
 To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
 Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
 Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
 The lowest as the highest ? some slight film 755
 The interposing bar which binds a soul

And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
 Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
 Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !
 How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed 760
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death :
 Why is it, flesh entrals it or enthrones ?
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth 765
 And power emerge, but also when strange chance
 Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,
 When sickness breaksthe body—hunger, watching,
 Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
 Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl 770
 Through life surrounded with all stirring things,
 Unmoved ; and he goes mad : and from the wreck
 Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
 You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
 Therefore, set free the soul alike in all, 775
 Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
 Accloys the spirit ! We may not be doomed
 To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
 Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,
 But elevate the race at once ! We ask 780
 To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
 All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
 Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
 See if we cannot beat thine angels yet !
 Such is my task. I go to gather this 785
 The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
 About the world, long lost or never found.
 And why should I be sad or lorn of hope ?
 Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
 Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust ? 790
 Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?
 Mine is no mad attempt to build a world

Apart from his, like those who set themselves
 To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
 And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams 795
 Were only born to vanish in this life,
 Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
 But chose to figure forth another world
 And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
 And all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ; but life 800
 Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth ! I am priest!
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit
 A poor existence, parting with a youth
 Like those who squander every energy
 Convertible to good, on painted toys, 805
 Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn
 All adventitious aims, from empty praise
 To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
 Important, and concerns himself for me,
 May know even these will follow with the rest— 810
 As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
 Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
 My own affections laid to rest awhile,
 Will waken purified, subdued alone
 By all I have achieved. Till then—till then . . . 815
 Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
 Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types ! 820
 See, see, they look on me : I triumph now !
 But one thing, Festus, Michal ! I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say—
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Festus. I do believe !

Michal. I ever did believe ! 825

Paracelsus. Those words shall never fade from
 out my brain !

PARACELSUS

PART I

This earnest of the end shall never fade !
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge, 830
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl ?
Festus, I plunge !

PART II

PARACELSIUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Constantinople; the house of a Greek Conjurer.* 1521

PARACELSIUS

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs 5
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight! 'T is done at last.
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act! 'T is as yon cloud 10
Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
The heights already reached, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute 15
All I have clearly gained; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes:
And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much, 20
Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,

Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
 Make up the sum : and here amid the scrawled
 Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
 Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results !

25

A few blurred characters suffice to note
 A stranger wandered long through many lands
 And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
 Discoveries, as appended here and there,
 The fragmentary produce of much toil, 30
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
 Confusedly massed as when acquired ; he was
 Intent on gain to come too much to stay
 And scrutinize the little gained : the whole
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber 35
 And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
 A whole life, and my life ! Nothing to do,
 No problem for the fancy, but a life
 Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve 40
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
 Remembrancer set down concerning "life" ?
 "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream,"
 "It is the echo of time ; and he whose heart
 "Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech 45
 "Was copied from a human tongue, can never
 "Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
 "Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
 "Till some one hour's experience shows what
 nothing,
 "It seemed, could clearer show ; and ever after, 50
 "An altered brow and eye and gait and speech
 "Attest that now he knows the adage true
 "'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'"

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any : now, let my time be !

55

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill,
'T is done. I must desist and take my chance.
I cannot keep on the stretch : 't is no back-shrinking—

For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though, closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true : " I shall not quit
" His chamber till I know what I desire ! "
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea ?

60

65

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments ! Rest !
Where has it kept so long ? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease ! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever ! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length !
Even in failure, rest ! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once !

75

What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all
Been undergone for this ? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
Slightingly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,

80

85

End things or mend them,—why, I could not choose
A humbler mood to wait for the event !

No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task : 90
The rest is God's concern ; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines, 95
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power ; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them ; behold, 100
He bares his front : a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms !
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well ! What 's failure or success to me ? 105
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it ; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.

Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vow,

The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither ; but foreseeing not 110
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail 115
I felt them not ; yet now, 't is very plain

Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
 If not love, say, like love : there was a time
 When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
 Set not remorselessly love's claims aside. 125
 This heart was human once, or why recall
 Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg which the Mayne
 Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
 And counsel and grave fears—where is he now 130
 With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
 I surely loved them—that last night, at least,

When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better. I am saved
 The sad review of an ambitious youth

Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth, 135
 But let grow up and wind around a will
 Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
 Purging my path successively of aught
 Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.

I have made life consist of one idea : 140
 Ere that was master, up till that was born,
 I bear a memory of a pleasant life

Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn
 I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
 Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell 145
 Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
 To leave all trouble for my future plans,
 Since I had just determined to become
 The greatest and most glorious man on earth.

And since that morn all life has been forgotten : 150
 All is one day, one only step between
 The outset and the end : one tyrant all-
 Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
 One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
 Through a career apparently adverse 155
 To its existence : life, death, light and shadow,

The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
 Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
 Not ministers of sorrow or delight :
 A wondrous natural robe in which she went. 160
 For some one truth would dimly beacon me
 From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
 O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
 Into assured light in some branching mine
 Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold— 165
 And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
 On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;
 I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
 So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
 So much is good, then, in this working sea 170
 Which parts me from that happy strip of land :
 But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !
 And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
 And still more faint as the sea widens ; last
 I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light 175
 From its own putrefying depths alone.
 Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand ;
 Now, any miserable juggle can bid
 My pride depart. All is alike at length :
 God may take pleasure in confounding pride 180
 By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
 I am here, in short : so little have I paused
 Throughout ! I never glanced behind to know
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,
 And thus insensibly am—what I am ! 185

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,
 To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
 Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first
 To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone, 190

In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win
 Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
 To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it 195
 Indignant back, I might convince myself
 My aims remained supreme and pure as ever !
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
 That, though I sink, another may succeed ? 200
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'T was politic in you, Aureole, to reject
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on : 205
 For now 't is all or nothing. Mighty profit
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
 Full consummation ! As a man, you had
 A certain share of strength ; and that is gone
 Already in the getting these you boast. 210
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
 "Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth
 "To light ; this hast thou done : be glad ! Now,
 seek
 "The strength to use which thou hast spent in
 getting!"

And yet 't is much, surely 't is very much,
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts, 215
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
 Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !
 And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all, 220
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?

Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recompense!
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,
 Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed 225
 The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
 God ! was I fighting sleep off for death's sake ?

God ! Thou art mind ! Unto the master-mind
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone ! 230
 All else I will endure ; if, as I stand
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
 I bow me ; 't is thy will, thy righteous will ;
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ;
 And if no trace of my career remain 235
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers level with the air,
 See thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou ! 240
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !
 Hold me before the frequence of thy seraphs
 And say—"I crushed him, lest he should disturb
 "My law. Men must not know their strength :
 behold
 "Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!" 245

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
 Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend
 To work man's welfare through my weakendeavour,
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam 250
 From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide
 This puny hand and let the work so wrought
 Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet not
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
 It were no marvel then—but I have reached 255

Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !
 Give but one hour of my first energy,
 Of that invincible faith, but only one !
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way 260
 To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
 And why dispute it now ? I 'll not believe
 But some undoubted warning long ere this 265
 Had reached me : a fire-labarum was not deemed
 Too much for the old founder of these walls.
 Then, if my life has not been natural,
 It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight, 270
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 't is plain,
 Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;
 But who clothes summer, who is life itself ?
 God, that created all things, can renew !
 And then, though after-life to please me now 275
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
 As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk ?
 What use were punishment, unless some sin
 Be first detected ? let me know that first ! 280
 No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

[A voice from within]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a care it stirred
 If the voice were real or no :
 I heard it in my youth when first 285
 The waters of my life outburst :
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—

As if all poets, God ever meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent 290
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
 So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
 As if these leaned in airy ring 295
 To take me ; this the song they sing.

“ Lost, lost ! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home.
 Come, come ! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe 300
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink’st beneath.
 So sank we in those old years,
 We who bid thee, come ! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o’erpast.
 And altogether we, thy peers, 305
 Will pardon crave for thee, the last
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
 With those who watch but work no more,
 Who gaze on life but live no more.
 Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak 310
 The message which our lips, too weak,
 Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
 Our fault : such trust, and all a dream !
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace
 Where the richness ran to flowers : 315
 Couldst not sing one song for grace ?
 Not make one blossom man’s and ours ?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers,
 And join us, leaving as he found 320
 The world, he was to loosen, bound ?
 Anguish ! ever and for ever ;

Aprile. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair

Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
 Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
 The siren's ! Yes, 't is like thou hast attained !
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed 360
 In after-time ; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Paracelsus. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe !

Thou art ordained to follow in my track, 365
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou hast searched or striven !

Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me after all, 370
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Aprile. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :
 Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will sit
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs, 375
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne : but none shall ever know !
 Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount 380
 After long time : so thou reveal'st my soul.
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Paracelsus. (His secret ! I shall get his secret
 —fool !)

I am he that aspired to KNOW : and thou ?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved ! 385

Paracelsus. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.
Aprile. Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
 Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
 My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment, but neglected all the means 390
 Of realizing even the frailest joy,
 Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
 Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
 Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure
 march

O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing, 395
 Neglecting nought below for aught above,
 Despising nothing and ensuring all—
 Nor that I could (my time to come again)
 Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well. 400
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

Oh ye who armed me at such cost,
 How shall I look on all of ye
 With your gifts even yet on me ?

Paracelsus. (Ah, 't is some moonstruck creature
 after all ! 405

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed
 To echo one foreboding of my heart

So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair 410
 Which turns to it as if they were akin :

And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above
 The painful fruitless striving of the brow
 And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set 415
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !

Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the
 cause ?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm !
Tell me what thou wouldest be, and what I am.

Aprile. I would love infinitely, and be loved. 420
 First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
 Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star, 425
 Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king
 Regal for his white locks ; no youth who stands
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,
 His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
 Until the tyrant pass ; no lawgiver, 430
 No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils
 Given by a god for love of her—too hard !
 Every passion sprung from man, conceived by
 man,
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
 Or blend with others struggling in one form, 435
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
 Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
 With a fit frame to execute its will—
 Even unconsciously to work its will—
 You should be moved no less beside some strong 440
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
 Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
 With its own splendour ! All this I would do :
 And I would say, this done, “ His sprites created,
 “ God grants to each a sphere to be its world, 445
 “ Appointed with the various objects needed
 “ To satisfy its own peculiar want ;
 “ So, I create a world for these my shapes
 “ Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! ”
 And, at the word, I would contrive and paint 450
 Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and
 wastes,

Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,

Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim
thrice

455

Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone :
Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,
Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled with men,
Men everywhere ! And this performed in turn,
When those who looked on, pined to hear the
hopes

460

And fears and hates and loves which moved the
crowd,

I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak ; no thought which ever stirred 465
A human breast should be untold ; all passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well :
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow.
Now piled up in a grand array of words.

470

This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.

475

Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
Having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die : preserving so throughout my course
God full on me, as I was full on men :

480

He would approve my prayer, "I have gone
through

"The loveliness of life ; create for me 485
"If not for men, or take me to thyself,
"Eternal, infinite love ! "

If thou hast ne'er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.

Paracelsus. Ah me !

Aprile. But thou art here ! 490

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim,
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I 495
Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen !
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, 't is clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,

And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time : what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? 'T were little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill 505
At every turn. Let all be as it is.

Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means
Answering to our mind ! But now I seem 510
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon
My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the East ;
Who heeds them ? I can pass them. Serpents'
scales,

And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins 515
 Must help me ; and a little here and there
 Is all I can aspire to : still my art
 Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
 " Had I green jars of malachite, this way
 " I'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten
 above, 520
 " Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set
 " The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
 " Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample 525
 Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
 Some trifle little heeded there, but here
 The place's one perfection—with what joy
 Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
 Foregoing all the marvels out of reach ! 530
 Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
 Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
 To let my followers know what such things are !
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
 When nights were still, and still the moaning sea, 535
 And far away I could descry the land
 Whence I departed, whither I return,
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
 And fling my gains to them, worthless or true. 540
 " Friends," I would say, " I went far, far for them,
 " Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the
 mounds
 " Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow
 out,
 " Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
 " Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly 545
 gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
 " In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,

" But happy plucking them at any price.

" To me, who have seen them bloom in their own
soil,

" They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you! 550

" And guess, from what they are, the springs that
fed them,

" The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,

" The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew!"

Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness
Would win me honour. But not these alone

555

Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :

The lowest hind should not possess a hope,

A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better

Than he his own heart's language. I would live 560

For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,

As a discoverer's memory is attached

To all he finds ; they should be mine henceforth,

Imbued with me, though free to all before :

For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine, 565

Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this

Would need a meaner spirit, than the first ;

Nay, 't would be but the selfsame spirit, clothed

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit :

As one spring wind unbids the mountain snow 570

And comforts violets in their hermitage.

But, master, poet, who hast done all this,

How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me ?

Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,

Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall, 575

Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,

Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,

That will not wait thy summons, will not rise

Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand

Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd

580

By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years
Had passed and still their love possessed thee
wholly,
When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And to that end, select some shape once more ?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through
storm ?
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

585
590
595
600
605
610

Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus,
Aprile ! That the truth should reach me thus !
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint !

615

Aprile. My king ! and envious thoughts could

PARACELSIUS

PART II

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
 In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
 Go bravely through the world at last ! What care 615
 Through me or thee ? I feel thy breath. Why,
 tears ?

Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me ?

Paracelsus. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while
 I learn

To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
 We wake at length from weary dreams ; but both 620
 Have slept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
 I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge. 625
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake :
 What penance canst devise for both of us ?

Aprile. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness ! Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'T is as I knew : I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face ! 630
 O poet, think of me, and sing of me !
 But to have seen thee and to die so soon !

Paracelsus. Die not, Aprile ! We must never
 part.

Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once more ?

Part ? never !

635

Till thou the lover, know ; and I, the knower,
 Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !
 We will accept our gains, and use them—now !
 God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Aprile. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his
 side.

640

Hush ! hush !

Ha : go you ever girt about

With phantoms, powers? I have created such,
But these seem real as I.

Paracelsus. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness?

Aprile. Stay; I know,
I know them: who should know them well as I? 645
White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

Paracelsus. Let him but live, and I have my
reward!

Aprile. Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,
Who in his person acts his own creations.

Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush! 650

Paracelsus. Live! for my sake, because of my
great sin,

To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
And their deep import. Live! 't is not too late.
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.

Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean
thus,

And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one
word

Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile!

Aprile. No, no. Crown me? I am not one
of you!

'T is he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Paracelsus. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile? Let
me love!

655

660

I have attained, and now I may depart.

PART III

PARACELSIUS

SCENE.—*Basil; a chamber in the house of
PARACELSIUS.* 1526

PARACELSIUS, FESTUS

Paracelsus. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out!

Festus. True, true!

'T is very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhoped renewal
Of our affections.

5

Paracelsus. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

10

Festus. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I
waive:

The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained

15

As best I could the promptings of my spirit
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first, 20
 To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
 Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.

Paracelsus. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
 Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
 Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl? 25

Festus. Just so.

Paracelsus. And yet her calm sweet coun-
 tenance,
 Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
 Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
 Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
 In flakes through that old leafy bower built under 30
 The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
 Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
 Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves
 Much wondering notes so simple could divert
 My mind from study. Those were happy days. 35
 Respect all such as sing when all alone!

Festus. Scarcely alone: her children, you may
 guess,
 Are wild beside her.

Paracelsus. Ah, those children quite
 Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:
 A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct: 40
 No change, no change! Not but this added grace
 May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
 And Michal may become her motherhood;
 But 't is a change, and I detest all change,
 And most a change in aught I loved long since. 45
 So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me?

Festus. O very proud will Michal be of you!
 Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
 Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed

Adventure, or devising its reward ; 50
 Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
 For it was strange how, even when most secure
 In our domestic peace, a certain dim
 And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed
 A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
 A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
 Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
 By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
 To point to one so loved and so long lost.
 And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears— 60
 How you would laugh should I recount them now !
 I still predicted your return at last
 With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
 All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which
 Attain renown by any chance, I smiled, 65
 As well aware of who would prove his peer.
 Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
 As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Paracelsus. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
 In the fantastic projects and day-dreams 70
 Of a raw restless boy !

Festus. Oh, no : the sunrise
 Well warranted our faith in this full noon !
 Can I forget the anxious voice which said
 “Festus, have thoughts like these ere shaped
 themselves
 “In other brains than mine ? have their possessors 75
 “Existed in like circumstance ? were they weak
 “As I, or ever constant from the first,
 “Despising youth’s allurements and rejecting
 “As spider-films the shackles I endure ?
 “Is there hope for me ?”—and I answered gravely 80
 As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
 More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
 For all your glorious . . .

Paracelsus. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine!
Recall

With all the said recallings, times when thus 85
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Festus. Why—why—
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still,

Aureole, 90
You are changed, very changed! 'T were losing
nothing

To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

Paracelsus. My friend! you seek my pleasure,
past a doubt:
You will best gain your point, by talking, not 95
Of me, but of yourself.

Festus. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds 100
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake. Sigh not! 't is too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud
fate.

But you are very kind to humour me 105
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Paracelsus. Festus, strange secrets are let out
by death
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world : 110

And I am death's familiar, as you know.
 I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
 The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick 115
 He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
 All traces of God's finger out of him :
 Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,
 He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice 120
 Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June ; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, harebells grew in June ;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him. 125
 Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
 It seems to me much worthier argument
 Why pansies,¹ eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
 From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's
 choice)—

Than all fools find to wonder at in me 130
 Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
 I say this from no prurient restlessness,
 No self-complacency, itching to turn,
 Vary and view its pleasure from all points,
 And, in this instance, willing other men 135
 May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.
 What should delight me like the news of friends
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight ? 140
 Ofter than you had wasted thought on me
 Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
 But there 's no taming nor repressing hearts :
 God knows I need such!—So, you heard me speak?

¹ *Citulinula (flammina) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.*—DORN.

Festus. Speak? when?

Paracelsus. When but this morning at my class? 145
 There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
 Surely you know I am engaged to fill
 The chair here?—that's part of my proud fate
 To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
 To my great reputation, and no small
 Danger of Basil's benches long unused
 To crack beneath such honour? 150

Festus. I was there;

I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
 Small care was mine to listen?—too intent 155
 On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
 A full corroboration of my hopes!
 What can I learn about your powers? but they
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
 Your actual value; yet they worship you,
 Those various natures whom you sway as one! 160
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Paracelsus. Stop, o' God's name: the thing's
 by no means yet

Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's labour
 —At least in substance? Nought so worth the
 gaining 165

As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
 Precision and emphasis—you, beside, are clearly
 Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
 The subject than your stool—allowed to be
 A notable advantage.

Festus. Surely, Aureole, 170
 You laugh at me!

Paracelsus. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,
 I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget
 Much, and what laughter should be like. No less
 However, I forego that luxury

Since it alarms the friend who brings it back. 175
 True, laughter like my own must echo strangely
 To thinking men ; a smile were better far ;
 So, make me smile ! If the exulting look
 You wore but now be smiling, 't is so long
 Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are born 180
 Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 And in the earth a stage for altars only.

Never change, Festus : I say, never change ! 185

Festus. My God, if he be wretched after all !

Paracelsus. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,

—Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
 I have preserved. She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search 190
 I then engaged in, I should meet success)
 And yet be wretched : now, she augured false.

Festus. Thankheaven! but you spokestrangely :
 could I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find 195
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move
 Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own !

Paracelsus. And this for ever !

For ever ! gull who may, they will be gulled ! 200
 They will not look nor think ; 't is nothing new
 In them : but surely he is not of them !
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
 Though all besideweresand-blind—you, my friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye 205
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision : would remain serene,

Though singular amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,

210

And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute ! 'T is vain to fret at it.

I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity

215

All further information, good or bad.

Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me

Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man

220

Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern books
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remained unchanged in semblance ; nay, his brow
Was hued with triumph : every spirit then

Praising, *his* heart on flame the while :—a tale ! 225
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

Festus. Some foul deed sullies then a life which
else

Were raised supreme ?

Paracelsus. Good : I do well, most well !
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
With what is past their power to comprehend ?

230

I should not strive now : only, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe

Of shallow plausibilities alone : 235
One who, in youth, found wise enough to choose
The happiness his riper years approve,

Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad

And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him

240

The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,
 Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When it by right should have increased despair : 245

—Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the light thus from the first
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it disturb our old
 Relation, if it make me out more wise ? 250

Therefore, once more reminding him how well
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw
 That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,
 You were deceived, and thus were you deceived— 255
 I have not been successful, and yet am
 Most miserable ; 't is said at last ; nor you
 Give credit, lest you force me to concede
 That common sense yet lives upon the world !

Festus. You surely do not mean to banter me ? 260

Paracelsus. You know, or—if you have been
 wise enough

To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,
 That 't was my purpose to find joy or grief
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan 265

Or plot or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing
 Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
 Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !

Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength ; 270
 And having failed therein most signally,
 Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
 As all-excelling would have been the prize
 Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
 To vex your frank good spirit late so glad 275

In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.

280

But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend :

Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,

285

Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend !

Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;
That answers not my purpose ; for 't is like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained

290

Of its wise population, every corner

Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
Here Oecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,

Here Castellanus, as profound as he,

Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
And staring,—that the zany of the show,

295

Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
His trappings with a grace but seldom judged

Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile

That will go round ! Is it not therefore best

300

To venture a rehearsal like the present

In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,

The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn

Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !

Festus. These are foul vapours, Aureole ;
nought beside !

305

The effect of watching, study, weariness.

Were there a spark of truth in the confusion

Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard

These wanderings, bred of faintness and much
study.

310

'T is not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.

Paracelsus. I have said it, dearest Festus !
For the manner, 't is ungracious probably ;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best 315
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still ?

Festus. No ; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent 320
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects :
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus. This worthy Festus 325
Is one of them, at last ! 'T is so with all !
First, they set down all progress as a dream ;
And next, when he whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold, 330
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success !

Festus. Few doubtful steps ? when death retires
before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul, 335
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most, swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
When we may look to you as one ordained

To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
 Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?
 When . . .

Paracelsus. When and where, the devil, did you get

345

This notable news ?

Festus. Even from the common voice ;
 From those whose envy, daring not dispute
 The wonders it decries, attributes them
 To magic and such folly.

Paracelsus. Folly ? Why not
 To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless 350
 In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
 Us or our doings : once we were judged worth
 The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,
 And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
 Was fair enough as prophesyings go ; 355
 At fault a little in detail, but quite
 Precise enough in the main ; and hereupon
 I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
 (The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

Festus. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes
 which fed 360
 Your youth have not been realized as yet ?
 Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?
 Or that their innate . . .

Paracelsus. As I said but now,
 You have a very decent prophet's fame,
 So you but shun details here. Little matter 365
 Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they
 sought,
 Safe and secure from all ambitious fools ;
 Or whether my weak wits are overcome
 By what a better spirit would scorn : I fail.
 And now methinks 't were best to change a theme 370
 I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.

I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;
 But there are times when patience proves at fault,
 As now : this morning's strange encounter—you
 Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed 375
 Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
 No friend have I among the saints at peace,
 To judge by any good their prayers effect.
 I knew you would have helped me—why not he,
 My strange competitor in enterprise, 380
 Bound for the same end by another path,
 Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
 At our disastrous journey's doubtful close ?
 How goes it with Aprile ? Ah, they miss
 Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven, 385
 Our martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:
 The poor mad poet is howling by this time !
 Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
 I could not quite repress the varied feelings
 This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent, 390
 And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
 Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what
 In my time was a gate) fronting the road
 From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

Festus. Trifle not :
 Answer me, for my sake alone ! You smiled 395
 Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
 Yourself, might blot the else so bright result ;
 Yet if your motives have continued pure,
 Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this,
 You have experienced a defeat, why then 400
 I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
 From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
 But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.
 You sought not fame nor gain nor even love,
 No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat 405
 Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge

Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
Yourself the first. But how is the event?
You are defeated—and I find you here!

Paracelsus. As though “here” did not signify
defeat!

I spoke not of my little labours here,
But of the break-down of my general aims :
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse, 410
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice. A professorship
At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life’s delights to render me a match 415
For duties arduous as such post demands,—
Be it far from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice, 420
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come :
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the
earth 425
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope 430
Had promised him interminable years ;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man’s mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin ; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing ’neath his nose 435
440

Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
 Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
 I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
 Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust
 Of stench from the ingredients just alight

445

Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
 Not easily laid : and ere an hour the prince
 Slept as he never slept since prince he was.

A day—and I was posting for my life,
 Placarded through the town as one whose spite

450

Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
 Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to life :

455

To the great reputation of the seer
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
 Much largess from his highness to the monks—

And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics

460

Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
 Touching his sickness: last of all were joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk

465

To swell the complement by seizing me
 Who—doubtless somerank sorcerer—endeavoured
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct

The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.

470

By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
 Of further favours. This one case may serve

To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile

475

Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;
 They authorize some honour ; ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent ; 480
 He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,
 And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the dead."
 I weary you, I see. I merely sought
 To show, there's no great wonder after all
 That, while I fill the class-room and attract 485
 A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay,
 And therefore need not scruple to accept
 The utmost they can offer, if I please :
 For 't is but right the world should be prepared
 To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants 490
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.
 Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
 Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
 You mind the fables we have read together. 495

Festus. You do not think I comprehend a word.
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
 To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;
 But surely you must feel how vague and strange
 These speeches sound.

Paracelsus. Well, then : you know my hopes ; 500
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;
 That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
 That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
 On that account is idle, and further effort
 Tomend and patch what's marred beyond repairing, 505
 As useless : and all this was taught your friend
 By the convincing good old-fashioned method
 Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Festus. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were just ?
 God wills not . . .

Paracelsus. Now, 't is this I most admire— 510
 101

The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
 Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
 Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
 And see the will in question charactered
 On the heaven's vault. 'T is hardly wise to moot 515
 Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
 I know as much of any will of God
 As knows some dumb and tortured brutewhat Man,
 His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
 That plague him every way ; but there, of course, 520
 Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
 My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,
 Subdued but not convinced. I know as little
 Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 Better things in my youth. I simply know 525
 I am no master here, but trained and beaten
 Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
 Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed 530
 Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
 Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
 Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
 Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
 Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring 535
 Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
 Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
 A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
 Or spurned before ; such now supply the place
 Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods 540
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Festus. If I interpret well your words, I own
 It troubles me but little that your aims,
 Vast in their dawning and most likely grown

Extravagantly since, have baffled you.

Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;

Because they are too glorious to be gained,

You do not blindly cling to them and die ;

550

You fell, but have not sullenly refused

To rise, because an angelworsted you

In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer,

And though too harsh and sudden is the change

To yield content as yet, still you pursue

555

The ungracious path as though 't were rosy-strewn.

'T is well : and your reward, or soon or late,

Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

Paracelsus. Ah, very fine ! For my part, I conceive

The very pausing from all further toil,

560

Which you find heinous, would become a seal

To the sincerity of all my deeds.

To be consistent I should die at once ;

I calculated on no after-life ;

Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)

565

Here am I with as passionate regret

For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,

As if their preservation had been first

And foremost in my thoughts ; and this strange fact

Humbled me wondrously, and had due force

570

In rendering me the less averse to follow

A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—

You will not understand—but 't was a man

With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,

With the same fervour and no more success,

575

Perishing in my sight ; who summoned me

As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,

To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer

That God should interfere in my behalf,

But to distrust myself, put pride away,

580

And give my gains, imperfect as they were,

To men. I have not leisure to explain
 How, since, a singular series of events
 Has raised me to the station you behold,
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account

585

The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views
 And may approve my penance : therefore here
 You find me, doing most good or least harm.
 And if folks wonder much and profit little
 'T is not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
 And the curtain falls : I must hold out till then.

590

Festus. Till when, dear Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Till I'm fairly thrust
 From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
 And even professors fall : should that arrive,
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
 We sin ; God's intimations rather fail
 In clearness than in energy : 't were well
 Did they but indicate the course to take
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
 Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

595

Festus. Be you but firm on that head ! long
 ere then

600

All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event :
 They praise you here as one whose lore, already
 Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart.

610

Paracelsus. This favour at their hands
 I look for earlier than your view of things 615
 Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day,
 Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
 Mere novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
 Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
 That unless miracles (as seem my works) 620
 Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
 To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set
 Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
 The teacher that oppugns them, till he once 625
 Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
 May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
 Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
 Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
 But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing, 630
 To force my system to a premature
 Short-lived development. Why swell the list ?
 Each has his end to serve, and his best way
 Of serving it : remove all these, remains
 A scantling, a poor dozen at the best, 635
 Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
 And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Festus. 'T is no encouraging picture : still these
 few
 Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
 Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Paracelsus. God grant it so ! 640
 I would make some amends : but if I fail,
 The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
 That much is in my method and my manner,
 My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
 Which hinders of reception and result 645
 My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !
 These old aims suffered not a looking-off
 Though for an instant ; therefore, only when

I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth 650
So dearly purchased—only then I found

Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself :

That to possess was one thing—to display

Another. With renown first in my thoughts,

655

Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it :

One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Festus. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation

To leave a labour of so little use.

660

Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Paracelsus. A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole

Extent of degradation, once engaged

In the confessing vein ? Despite of all

My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,

665

Docility and what not, 't is yet to learn

If when the task shall really be performed,

My inclination free to choose once more,

I shall do aught but slightly modify

The nature of the hated task I quit.

670

In plain words, I am spoiled ; my life still tends

As first it tended ; I am broken and trained

To my old habits : they are part of me.

I know, and none so well, my darling ends

Are proved impossible : no less, no less,

675

Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when

Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me

And send me back content to my dull round ?

How can I change this soul ?—this apparatus

Constructed solely for their purposes,

680

So well adapted to their every want,

To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;

This intricate machine whose most minute

And meanest motions have their charm to me
 Though to none else—an aptitude I seize, 685
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
 A property, a fitness, I explain
 And I alone :—how can I change my soul ?
 And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
 Under that soul's dominion—used to care 690
 For its bright master's cares and quite subdue
 Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
 So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
 Tried patient body ? God ! how I essayed
 To live like that mad poet, for a while, 695
 To love alone ; and how I felt too warped
 And twisted and deformed ! What should I do,
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
 To my old life and die as I began ? 700
 I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
 Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
 From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
 My nature cannot lose her first imprint ;
 I still must hoard and heap and class all truths 705
 With one ulterior purpose : I must know !
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe
 That I should only listen to his word
 To further my own aim ! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around, 710
 And I were happy could I quench as they
 This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
 With beauty for itself alone : alas,
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ; 715
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no
 more.

Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,

I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they !

Festus. I think I apprehend
What you would say : if you, in truth, design 720
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed !

Paracelsus. My friend, my friend,
I toil, you listen ; I explain, perhaps 725
You understand : there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse ?
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's
state

We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye, 730
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known ? You ! who are you, for-
sooth ?

That is the crowning operation claimed 735
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places : 't will be worth the while.

Festus. Are you mad, Aureole ? What can I
have said
To call for this ? I judged from your own words. 740

Paracelsus. Oh, doubtless ! A sick wretch de-
scribes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once : or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be ! 745
You find me here, half stupid and half mad :
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo

Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
 That I am led to trust my state to you :
 And the event is, you combine, contrast
 And ponder on my foolish words as though
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
 Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage !
 Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame ?
 Will you guess nothing ? will you spare me nothing ?
 Must I go deeper ? Ay or no ?

750

755

Festus. Dear friend . . .

Paracelsus. True : I am brutal—'t is a part of it ;
 The plague's sign—you are not a lazarus-haunter,
 How should you know ? Well then, you think it
 strange

760

I should profess to have failed utterly,
 And yet propose an ultimate return
 To courses void of hope : and this, because
 You know not what temptation is, nor how
 'T is like to ply men in the sickliest part.
 You are to understand that we who make
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end :
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
 Which'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
 And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
 To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm :
 We are assailed to life's extremest verge.

765

770

It will be well indeed if I return,
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
 I would forget hints of another fate,
 Significant enough, which silent hours
 Have lately scared me with.

775

Festus. Another ! and what ?

Paracelsus. After all, Festus, you say well : I am
 A man yet : I need never humble me.
 I would have been—something, I know not what ;
 But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.

780

There are worse portions than this one of mine.
You say well !

Festus. Ah !

Paracelsus. And deeper degradation !

If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
If vanity should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish
To find its early aspirations true,
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—

An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies ;
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no !
Utter damnation is reserved for hell !
I had immortal feelings ; such shall never
Be wholly quenched : no, no !

My friend, you wear 795

A melancholy face, and certain 't is
There 's little cheer in all this dismal work.
But was it my desire to set abroach
Such memories and forebodings ? I foresaw
Where they would drive. 'T were better we discuss 800
News from Lucerne or Zurich ; ask and tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.

Festus. I have thought : trust me, this mood
will pass away !

I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.

805

These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.

Look round ! The obstacles which kept the rest
From your ambition, have been spurned by you ; 810
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind
them all,

Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
 Avails to awe save these delusions bred
 From its own strength, its selfsame strength dis-
 guised,
 Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole ! Since 815
 The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
 The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
 And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
 At these entangling fantasies, as you
 At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
 Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts ! 820
 I know you.

Paracelsus. And I know you, dearest Festus !
 And how you love unworthily ; and how
 All admiration renders blind.

Festus. You hold
 That admiration blinds ?

Paracelsus. Ay and alas ! 825

Festus. Nought blinds you less than admiration,
 friend !

Whether it be that all love renders wise
 In its degree ; from love which blends with love—
 Heart answering heart—to love which spends
 itself

In silent mad idolatry of some 830

Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
 Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.

I say, such love is never blind ; but rather
 Alive to every the minutest spot

Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed 835
 So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.

Love broods on such : what then ? When first
 perceived

Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
 To overflush those blemishes with all
 The glow of general goodness they disturb ? 840

PARACELSUS

PART III

—To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-
back

Lest, since all love assimilates the soul 845

To what it loves, it should at length become

Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,

If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,

To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits

Even at God's foot, 't will be from such as love

Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause:

And least from those who hate, who most essay

By contumely and scorn to blot the light

Which forces entrance even to their hearts :

For thence will our defender tear the veil 855

And show within each heart, as in a shrine,

The giant image of perfection, grown

In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned

In the untroubled presence of its eyes.

True admiration blinds not; nor am I 860

So blind. I call your sin exceptional;
It springs from one whose life has passed the

It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
For eight days.

Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!
I speak of man's true nature, man's will.

I speak of men; to common men like me
The weakness you reveal endears us more.

The weakness you reveal endears you.
I like the fair traces of decay in you.

Like the far traces of decay
I bid you have good cheer!

Proclame ! Optime !

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest.

Instructing Paracelsus! yet 't is so

Come, I will show you where my merit lies

'T is in the advance of individual minds

That the slow crowd should ground their expec-

tation

PART III

PARACELSUS

Eventually to follow ; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;
For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
And a legitimate success, may be, 885
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others : I precede my age :
And whoso wills is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his own
May have a prosperous outset. But, alas !
My followers—they are noisy as you heard ;
But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones 890
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.
Festus. I would supply that art, then, or withhold
New arms until you teach their mystery.
Paracelsus. Content you, 't is my wish ; I have
recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men. 905
Of course they are for swaggering forth at once
Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—

Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !
 Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !
 A proper sight to scare the crows away !

910

Festus. Pity you choose not then some other method

Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
 At length established in the world bids fair
 To remedy all hindrances like these :

Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
 Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
 For raw beginners ; let his types secure
 A deathless monument to after-time ;
 Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
 The ultimate effect : sooner or later
 You shall be all-revealed.

915

920

Paracelsus. The old dull question
 In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess
 Two sorts of knowledge ; one,—vast, shadowy,
 Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :
 The other consists of many secrets, caught
 While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
 Prime principles which may conduct to much :
 These last I offer to my followers here.

925

Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
 My ancient study, and in effect you bid
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured :
 I must go find them scattered through the world.
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
 That one time is as proper to propound them
 As any other—to-morrow at my class,
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,
 They must begin by giving faith to them
 And acting on them : and I do not see
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well :

930

935

940

No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.
 I think my class will not forget the day
 I let them know the gods of Israel,
 Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averrões,
 Were blocks !

945

Festus. And that reminds me, I heard something
 About your waywardness : you burned their books,
 It seems, instead of answering those sages. 950

Paracelsus. And who said that ?

Festus. Some I met yesternight
 With Cæolampadius. As you know, the purpose
 Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'T was he 955
 Apprised me that the famous teacher here
 Was my old friend.

Paracelsus. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Festus. From Zurich with advices for the ear
 Of Luther, now at Wittenberg—(you know,
 I make no doubt, the differences of late 960
 With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
 Basil and . . .

Paracelsus. I remember. Here's a case, now,
 Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
 The books you mention. Pray, does Luther dream
 His arguments convince by their own force 965
 The crowds that own his doctrine ? No, indeed !
 His plain denial of established points
 Ages had sanctified and men supposed
 Could never be oppugned while earth was under
 And heaven above them—points which chance or
 time

970

Affected not—did more than the array
 Of argument which followed. Boldly deny !

There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
 Awhile ; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
 The thunderbolt which does not come : and next, 975
 Reproachful wonder and inquiry : those
 Who else had never stirred, are able now
 To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps
 To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
 —As never will my wise class its instructor. 980
 And you saw Luther ?

Festus. 'T is a wondrous soul !

Paracelsus. True : the so-heavy chain which
 galled mankind
 Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
 Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
 Of our own project—we who long before 985
 Had burst our trammels, but forgot the crowd,
 We should have taught, still groaned beneath their
 load :

This he has done and nobly. Speed that may !
 Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
 What benefits mankind must glad me too ; 990
 And men seem made, though not as I believed,
 For something better than the times produce.
 Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
 From Suabia have possessed, whom Münzer leads,
 And whom the duke, the landgrave and the elector 995
 Will calm in blood ! Well, well ; 't is not my
 world !

Festus. Hark !

Paracelsus. 'T is the melancholy wind astir
 Within the trees ; the embers too are grey :
 Morn must be near.

Festus. Best ope the casement : see,
 The night, late strewn with clouds and flying
 stars, 1000
 Is blank and motionless : how peaceful sleep

The tree-tops altogether ! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Paracelsus. Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree

By the hour, nor count time lost.

Festus. So you shall gaze : 1005
Those happy times will come again.

Paracelsus. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind

Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them ?

Festus. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend 1010
All error and mischance.

Paracelsus. Another world !
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come ? Man must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth ; and some few traces 1015
Of a diviner nature which look out

Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly 1020
As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.

But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
A station little enviable. From God

Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no : 1025
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity ;
These are its sign and note and character,
And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me forever, 1030
Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more !

See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted, grey and clear without the stars ;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves as if
Some snake, that weighed them down all night,

let go

1035

His hold ; and from the East, fuller and fuller,
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.

Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves 1040
All thick and glistering with diamond dew.

And you depart for Einsiedeln this day,
And we have spent all night in talk like this !
If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.

Festus.

One favour, 1045

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
Shall pass away, if light once more arise

Where all is darkness now, if you see fit 1050
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—

But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on his support, (as I must think
You trusted) is obscured and dim through you : 1055
For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole ?

PART IV

PARACELSIUS ASPIRES

SCENE.—*Colmar in Alsatia; an Inn.* 1528

PARACELSIUS, FESTUS

Paracelsus [to JOHANNES OPORINUS, his Secretary]. Sic itur ad astra! Dear Von Visenburg
Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set 5
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused 10
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
“Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
“Oppose the plague!” Even so? Do you too
share

Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint through 15
these,

Desist for these! They manage matters so
At Basil, 't is like: but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again, 20
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes:

And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
 So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
 That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it 25
 Out of the furrow ; there that stamp shall stay
 To show the next they fawn on, what they are,
 This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now despatch,
 Despatch, my trusty John ; and what remains 30
 To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
 Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
 This night ; we 'll weather the storm at least : to-
 morrow

For Nuremberg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk
 Has divers weighty matters for my ear : 35

[OPORINUS goes out.

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
 I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
 As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; at last
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
 How very kind, my first best only friend ! 40
 Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me !
 Not a hair silvered yet ? Right ! you shall live
 Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,
 And I—but let time show ! Did you not wonder ?
 I sent to you because our compact weighed 45
 Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
 At Basil, which the gods confound !)—because
 Once more I aspire. I call you to my side :
 You come. You thought my message strange ?

Festus. So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger 50
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words
 Purporting to be yours.

Paracelsus. He said no more,
 'T is probable, than the precious folk I leave
 Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,

'T is true ! poor Paracelsus is exposed
 At last ; a most egregious quack he proves :
 And those he overreached must spit their hate
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
 Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend !

Festus. What is your purpose, Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Oh, for purpose,
 There is no lack of precedents in a case
 Like mine ; at least, not precisely mine,
 The case of men cast off by those they sought
 To benefit.

Festus. They really cast you off ?
 I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
 Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full
 Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
 That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Paracelsus. The affair of Liechtenfels ? the
 shallowest fable,
 The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
 For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
 Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;
 And every word comes true. Saul is among
 The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased
 To play off the mere antics of my art,
 Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
 I got huge praise : but one can ne'er keep down
 Our foolish nature's weakness. Theretheyflocked,

Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,
 Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !
 I had a kindness for them, which was right ; 90
 But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
 A trust in them and a respect—a sort
 Of sympathy for them ; I must needs begin
 To teach them, not amaze them, “to impart
 “The spirit which should instigate the search 95
 “Of truth,” just what you bade me ! I spoke out.
 Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
 Filed off—“the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,
 Redoubling my endeavours to secure
 The rest. When lo ! one man had tarried so long 100
 Only to ascertain if I supported
 This tenet of his, or that ; another loved
 To hear impartially before he judged,
 And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems, 105
 Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most;
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
 Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
 And beacons properly, would commend again
 The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er, 110
 Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,
 Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
 But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
 The colic and what not. *Quid multa?* The end 115
 Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
 From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed
 The new professor scarce a year before ;
 And a vast flourish about patient merit 120
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
 Of which the example was some luckless wight

Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,
Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
And from my heart I wished them better suited
And better served. Good night to Basil, then !
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
The pleasure of a parting kick.

Festus. You smile :
Despise them as they merit !

135

Paracelsus. If I smile,
'T is with as very contempt as ever turned
Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,
This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home
Oh, sages have discovered we are born
For various ends—to love, to know : has ever
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
Of a nature in us formed to hate ? To hate ?
If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 't is hate !
Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.

140

145

150

Festus. But your plans, your plans ! 155
I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

Paracelsus. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,

To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil,

And so subside into a monument

160

Of one their censure blasted ? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower

My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me

And live as they prescribe, and make that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,

165

Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
To practise the true posture for receiving

The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance
When they shall condescend to tutor me ?

170

Then, one may feel resentment like a flame

Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,

And tangle and entwine mankind with error,

And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood

For a possession, ages : or one may mope

175

Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse

Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.

But I,—now Festus shall divine !—but I

Am merely setting out once more, embracing

My earliest aims again ! What thinks he now ?

180

Festus. Your aims ? the aims ?—to Know ? and
where is found

The early trust . . .

Paracelsus. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You know they
made me

A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know

The when and the how : hardly those means again !

185

Not but they had their beauty ; who should know

Their passing beauty, if not I ? Still, dreams

They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty
If that may be. Stay : thus they pass in song !

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes 190
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
 From out her hair : such balsam falls
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain, 195
Spent with the vast and howling main,
 To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ; 200
 Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
 From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
 As when a queen, long dead, was young. 205

Mine, every word ! And on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them ? So, I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved ; 210
No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Festus. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all ! I have travelled far, indeed, 215
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;

PARACELSIUS

PART IV

But rather let me gaze on that despair
 Than hear these incoherent words and see
 This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

220

Paracelsus. Why, man, I was light-hearted in
 my prime,

I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?

Aprile was a poet, I make songs—

225

'T is the very augury of success I want !

Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

Festus. Joyous ! and how ? and what remains
 for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I am sick
 Of naming) are impracticable.

Paracelsus. Ay, 230

Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !

Listen : my plan will please you not, 't is like,
 But you are little versed in the world's ways.

This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—

I will accept all helps ; all I despised

235

So rashly at the outset, equally

With early impulses, late years have quenched :

I have tried each way singly : now for both !

All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the rest.

I seek to know and to enjoy at once,

240

Not one without the other as before.

Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause

Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not
 baulk me

Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight

That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,

245

And gain is gain, however small. My soul

Can die then, nor be taunted—"what was
 gained?"

Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow

As though I had not spurned her hitherto,

Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion

250

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.

Festus. Success !

Paracelsus. And wherefore not ? Why not
prefer

Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark 255
As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best,
my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest too ?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.

I am a wanderer : I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed, 260
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds ; you may
conceive

My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance 265
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
I will fight the battle out ; a little spent
Perhaps, but still an able combatant. 270

You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?
But I can turn even weakness to account :
Of many tricks I know, 't is not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive, 275
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
What should I do with age ? So, sickness lends
An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,
And natural health is ignorance.

Festus.

I see

280

But one good symptom in this notable scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes.
 'T is not so : I am glad.

Paracelsus. And if I please
 To spit on them, to trample them, what then ? 285
 'T is sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth 290
 Power to match power, my strength against their
 strength,

And teach them their own game with their own
 arms—

Why, be it so and let them take their chance !

I am above them like a god, there's no

Hiding the fact : what idle scruples, then, 295

Were those that ever bade me soften it,

Communicate it gently to the world,

Instead of proving my supremacy,

Taking my natural station o'er their head,

Then owning all the glory was a man's ! 300

—And in my elevation man's would be.

But live and learn, though life's short, learning,
 hard !

And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room

Must wait awhile for its best ornament, 305

The penitent empiric, who set up

For somebody, but soon was taught his place ;

Now, but too happy to be let confess

His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate

(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)

Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
 Good Pütter !

Festus. He who sneers thus, is a god !

Paracelsus. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very glad

You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive

315

To put a good face on the overthrow

I have experienced, and to bury and hide

My degradation in its length and breadth ;

How the mean motives I would make you think

Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,

320

The appetites I modestly allow

May influence me as being mortal still—

Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant

My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe :

You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for you

325

To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !

Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Festus. The past, then, Aureole,

Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love

Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean

No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,

330

Whate'er you say, there is no degradation ;

These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,

Or wherefore this disorder ? You are vexed

As much by the intrusion of base views,

Familiar to your adversaries, as they

335

Were troubled should your qualities alight

Amid their murky souls ; not otherwise,

A stray wolf which the winter forces down

From our bleak hills, suffices to affright

A village in the vales—while foresters

340

Sleep calm, though all night long the famished
troop

Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.

These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Paracelsus. May you be happy, Festus, my own
friend !

Festus. Nay, further ; the delights you fain
would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you. . . .

345

Paracelsus. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value ; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse :
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
Bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned :
I am just fit for that and nought beside.

355

I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy ;
Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge :
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly ; this will better explain—feel here !
Quick beating, is it not ?—a fire of the heart
To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me
once,

365

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity ;
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple

370

375

Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
 Has his peculiar merits : I suck in
 That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
 And then dismiss the fool ; for night is come,
 And I betake myself to study again,
 Till patient searchings after hidden lore
 Half wring some bright truth from its prison ;
 my frame

380

Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair 385

Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
 Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
 And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores ;
 When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
 I must review my captured truth, sum up
 Its value, trace what ends to what begins.

390

Its present power with its eventual bearings,
 Latent affinities, the views it opens,
 And its full length in perfecting my scheme.

I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down

395

From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
 Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost
 Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.

Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow !

I lapse back into youth, and take again

400

My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
 Means good to me, will make my cause his own.

See ! I have cast off this remorseless care

Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,

405

And my dim chamber has become a tent,

Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .

Why do you start ? I say, she listening here,
 (For yonder—Würzburg through the orchard-
 bough !)

Motions as though such ardent words should find

No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,

410

But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast

With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while !
Ha, ha !

Festus. It seems, then, you expect to reap
No unreal joy from this your present course,
But rather . . .

Paracelsus. Death ! To die ! I owe that much 415
To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse !
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
My time.

Festus. And you have never mused and said, 420
“I had a noble purpose, and the strength
“To compass it ; but I have stopped half-way,
“And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil
“To objects little worthy of the gift.
“Why linger round them still ? why clench my
fault ?

“Why seek for consolation in defeat,
“In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
“From ugliness ? why seek to make the most
“Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
“With mighty effort to redeem the past 430
“And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
“To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
“At their fit destination and my own ?”
You have never pondered thus ?

Paracelsus. Have I, you ask ?
Often at midnight, when most fancies come, 435
Would some such airy project visit me :
But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable ?
You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast. 440
Just as we cry, “No human voice before
“Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks ! ”

—Their querulous echo startles us ; we turn :
 What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea ?
 Some characters remain, too ! While we read,
 The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
 Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
 Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
 This is the record ; and my voice, the wind's.

445

[He sings.]

Over the sea our galleys went,
 With cleaving prows in order brave
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
 A gallant armament :

450

Each bark built out of a forest-tree

Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,
 Within and without, with black bull-hides,
 Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game :
 So, each good ship was rude to see,
 Rude and bare to the outward view,

455

But each upbore a stately tent
 Where cedar pales in scented row
 Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
 And an awning drooped the mast below,
 In fold on fold of the purple fine,
 That neither noontide nor starshine
 Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

465

Might pierce the regal tenement.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
 We set the sail and plied the oar ;
 But when the night-wind blew like breath,
 For joy of one day's voyage more,
 We sang together on the wide sea,
 Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
 Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
 Each helm made sure by the twilight star,

470

475

And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
Lay stretched along, each weary crew 480
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too :
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast, 485
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :
“ Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “ check
“ The shout, restrain the eager eye ! ” 490
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind, 495
And a statue bright was on every deck !
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !
All day we built its shrine for each, 500
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs ! 505
What laughter all the distance stirs !
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !
“ Our isles are just at hand,” they cried,
“ Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ; 510

"Our temple-gates are opened wide,

"Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping

"For these majestic forms"—they cried.

Oh, then we awoke with sudden start

515

From our deep dream, and knew, too late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,

Which had received our precious freight :

Yet we called out—"Depart !

"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

520

"Our work is done ; we have no heart

"To mar our work,"—we cried.

Festus. In truth ?

Paracelsus. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint

On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled
In order once : then follows—mark what follows !

525

"The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung

"To their first fault, and withered in their pride."

Festus. Come back then, Aureole ; as you fear
God, come !

This is foul sin ; come back ! Renounce the past,

Forswear the future ; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,

530

And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole !

Paracelsus. No way, no way ! it would not turn
to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—

535

'T is well for him ; but when a sinful man,

Envying such slumber, may desire to put

His guilt away, shall he return at once

To rest by lying there ? Our sires knew well

(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)

540

The fitting course for such : dark cells, dim lamps,

A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm :

No mossy pillow blue with violets !

Festus. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now. 545
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still : the lusts you fear will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more !
Say but the word !

Paracelsus. No, no ; those lusts forbid : 550
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you ; 't is their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey ; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not—then try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat ! 555
No, no ; learn better and look deeper, Festus !
If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles !

Festus. Do we so differ ? True, change must
proceed, 560
Whether for good or ill ; keep from me, which !
Do not confide all secrets : I was born
To hope, and you . . .

Paracelsus. To trust : you know the fruits !

Festus. Listen : I do believe, what you call trust
Was self-delusion at the best : for, see ! 565
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in his service—yield you 570
A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises ! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example ? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours 575
Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,

And we, who prate about that will, are fools !
 In short, God's service is established here
 As he determines fit, and not your way,
 And this you cannot brook. Such discontent 580
 Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !
 Affirm an absolute right to have and use
 Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—
 “ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do
 “ With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales, 585
 “ Sleeping in lazy pools ? ” Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least !

Paracelsus. 'T is like enough.

The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
 The East produces : lo, the master bids,—
 They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds 590
 In one night's space ; and, thisdone, straight begin
 Another century's sleep, to the great praise
 Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
 Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
 Wake them again. I am of different mould. 595
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him
 And done him service past my narrow bond,
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
 Beside, 't is vain to talk of forwarding
 God's glory otherwise ; this is alone 600
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men
 Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?
 We are his glory ; and if we be glorious,
 Is not the thing achieved ?

Festus. Shall one like me
 Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have
 changed you much,

And you have left your first love, and retain
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
 Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
 And who shall call your course without reward ?

PARACELSIUS

PART IV

For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes ? 610
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me ?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold 615
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return !

Paracelsus. And quickly. John the thief
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary, 620
I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night . . .
Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus ?
No flattery ! One like you needs not be told
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived. 625
Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair 630
Wrapt the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !
Even God flatters : but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate and wrong
From puny foes ; my one friend's scorn shall 635
brand me :
No fear of sinking deeper !

Festus. No, dear Aureole !
No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully.
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty 640
Majestic spirit !—even I can see
You own some higher law than ours which call

Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me ; and I blame you where they bid, 645
 Only so long as blaming promises

To win peace for your soul : the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.

But wherefore should I scruple to avow 650

In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate is most inexplicable to me ?

And should you perish without recompense
 And satisfaction yet—too hastily

I have relied on love : you may have sinned, 655
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Paracelsus. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—
 't is because

You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours ! 660
 Well thought on : never let her know this last
 Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared
 Insult me—me she loved :—so, grieve her not !

Festus. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Paracelsus. Michal is dead ! pray Christ we
 do not craze ! 665

Festus. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me
 thus !

Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
 I cannot bear those eyes.

Paracelsus. Nay, really dead ?

Festus. 'T is scarce a month.

Paracelsus. Stone dead !—then you have
 her laid

Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know, 670
 I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
 Even you. I have no julep, as men think,

PARACELSIUS

PART IV

To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth : I have thought much of it : 675
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Festus. Aureole !

Paracelsus. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say : I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought 680
In an intelligible dress of words ;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Festus. But not on this account alone ? you
surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along ?

Paracelsus. And Michal sleeps among the roots
and dews, 685
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away !
Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize, 690
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport !—Behold !

PART V

PARACELSIUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541

FESTUS, PARACELSIUS

Festus. No change ! The weary night is well-nigh spent,

The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars Grey morning glimmers feebly : yet no change !

Another night, and still no sigh has stirred That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit

Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body, Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside

Was breaking, to the last they held out bright, As a stronghold where life intrenched itself ;

But they are dead now—very blind and dead : He will drowse into death without a groan.

5

10

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole ! The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wast !

And now not one of those who struck thee down— Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay

15

And satisfy himself his little hand Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change ! 'T is much That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,

And chafe his hands ; 't is much : but he will sure 20
 Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
 Once more—but only once ! His hollow cheek
 Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
 At his own state were just about to break
 From the dying man : my brain swam, my throat
 swelled,

25

And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
 They told me how, when first brought here, he
 seemed

Resolved to live, to lose no faculty ;
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell :
 When straight his features fell, an hour made white
 The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,
 Only the eye remained intense awhile
 As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
 And then he lay as here he lies.

30

Ay, here !

35

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
 Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends
 For countless generations fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace ;—the creature-god
 She instances when angels would dispute
 The title of her brood to rank with them.

40

Angels, this is our angel ! Those bright forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
 Are human, but not his ; those are but men
 Whom other men press round and kneel before ;
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories : see it here !
 Behold earth's paragon ! Now, raise thee, clay !

45

50

God ! Thou art love ! I build my faith on that.

Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
 So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
 Wherein we stumble. God ! what shall we say ? 55
 How has he sinned ? How else should he have
 done ?

Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
 He might be busied by the task so much
 As half forgot awhile its proper end.

Dost thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not but prefer 60
 That I should range myself upon his side—
 How could he stop at every step to set

Thy glory forth ? Hadst thou but granted him
 Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—

Save him, dear God ; it will be like thee : bathe him
 In light and life ! Thou art not made like us ;
 We should be wroth in such a case ; but thou
 Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
 Which come unsought and will not pass away ! 65

I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
 Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
 So that it reached me like a solemn joy ;

It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
 But what am I ? Thou madest him and knowest 70

How he was fashioned. I could never err
 That way : the quiet place beside thy feet,
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts :
 But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as well !

Ah ! he wakens ! Aureole, I am here ! 't is
 Festus !

I cast away all wishes save one wish—
 Let him but know me, only speak to me !
 He mutters ; louder and louder ; any other
 Than I, with brain less laden, could collect

What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look ! 85
 Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast ?
 Misery that he should fix me with his eye,
 Quick talking to some other all the while !
 If he would husband this wild vehemence
 Which frustrates its intent !—I heard, I know 90
 I heard my name amid those rapid words.
 Oh, he will know me yet ! Could I divert
 This current, lead it somehow gently back
 Into the channels of the past !—His eye
 Brighter than ever ! It must recognize me ! 95

I am Erasmus : I am here to pray
 That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
 The schools of Paris and of Padua send
 These questions for your learning to resolve.
 We are your students, noble master : leave 100
 This wretched cell, what business have you here ?
 Our class awaits you ; come to us once more !
 (O agony ! the utmost I can do
 Touches him not ; how else arrest his ear ?)
 I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him. 105
 Better be mute and see what God shall send.

Paracelsus. Stay, stay with me !

Festus. I will ; I am come here
 To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old ;
 Festus, you know, you must know !

Paracelsus. Festus ! Where's
 Aprile, then ? Has he not chanted softly 110
 The melodies I heard all night ? I could not
 Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
 But I made out his music well enough,
 O well enough ! If they have filled him full
 With magical music, as they freight a star 115
 With light, and have remitted all his sin,
 They will forgive me too, I too shall know !

Festus. Festus, your Festus !

Paracelsus. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know ?
I try ; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold !

120

Festus. My hand, see !

Paracelsus. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
We get so near—so very, very near !

'T is an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down,
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.

125

And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales !

Festus. And what are these to you ?

Paracelsus. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well ! most like I never

130

Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes !

Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,

135

One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn !
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But

now,

Who will believe 't was you that held me back ?
Listen : there 's shame and hissing and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits

140

Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,

The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me !

And thus your famous plan to sink mankind

In silence and despair, by teaching them

One of their race had probed the inmost truth,

145

Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—

Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair ?

Ha, ha ! why, they are hooting the empiric,

The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed

PARACELSUS

PART V

Madly upon a work beyond his wits ; 150
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed !
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends ! 155
No, no ; I am the first and last, I think.

Festus. Dear friend, who are accursed? who has done . . .

Paracelsus. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or you,

Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage peers? 160
Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow. 165
Only observe! why, fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths 170
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! Grey
crew,

Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths 175
Have shaken a little the palm about each prince?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect, 180
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:

I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :
Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed my pledge ? 185

Festus. Peace, peace ; ah, see !

Paracelsus. Oh, emptiness of fame !
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars !

—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood,
indeed,

190

But stand no longer ? What a warm light life
After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours ! 195
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me : oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,

200

The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

Festus. A light 205

Will struggle through these thronging words at
last.

As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate.
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here !

210

Paracelsus. Cruel ! I seek her now—I kneel—
I shriek—

I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades ;
 And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone ! 215
 'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels
 Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you
 Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
 And all at once they leave you, and you know them ! 220

We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why, even now
 I am not too secure against foul play ;
 The shadows deepen and the walls contract :
 No doubt some treachery is going on.

'T is very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile ? 225
 Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky
 loathsome

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall
 In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile !
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you, 230
 Poet ? Hold on me for your life ! If once
 They pull you !—Hold !

'T is but a dream—no more !
 I have you still ; the sun comes out again ;
 Let us be happy : all will yet go well !
 Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile, 235
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labours ascertained,
 Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
 But after glideth glassy to the sea,
 So, full content shall henceforth be my lot ? 240
 What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your clear voice
 Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
 How could I still remain on earth, should God
 Grant me the great approval which I seek ?
 I, you, and God can comprehend each other, 245
 But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;
 For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,

Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from
them,

I drank thus unespied ; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them.—'T were best consider that !
You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is this too much ?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die !

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first 260
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to thee?
I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly 265
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
Which fed my youth ! Only one hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then !

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here ! God's creatures,

And yet he takes no pride in us!—none, none!

Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 't is a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone ! Small time remains, 280
 And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap
 Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
 Will hardly serve me through ; while I have laboured
 It has decayed ; and now that I demand
 Its best assistance, it will crumble fast : 285
 A sad thought, a sad fate ! How very full
 Of wormwood 't is, that just at altar-service,
 The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
 When glory dawns and all is at the best,
 The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint 290
 And die for want of a wood-piler's help !
 Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
 Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
 Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
 Of what I say ; something may yet be done. 295

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !
 All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
 It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
 Beside your desolate fane : the arches dim,
 The crumbling columns grand against the moon, 300
 Could I but rear them up once more—but that
 May never be, so leave them ! Trust me, friends,
 Why should you linger here when I have built
 A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
 Trust me, they are but ruins ! See, Aprile, 305
 Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared
 With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
 Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is :
 I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek 310
 Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
 God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why men,
 men,

I am not formed for it ! Those hideous eyes
 Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
 They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me, 315
 Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
 The horrible scorn ! You thought I could sup-
 port it.

But now you see what silly fragile creature
 Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
 Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved 320
 From hate like this. Let me but totter back !
 Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
 Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
 Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile ! I am very calm : 325
 Be not deceived, there is no passion here
 Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing :
 I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
 Enough of that : 't is said and it shall be.
 And now be merry : safe and sound am I 330
 Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
 And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile !

Festus. Have you no thought, no memory
 for me,
 Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
 Is gone, and you alone are left me now, 335
 And even you forget me. Take my hand—
 Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Festus, my own friend, you are
 come at last ?
 As you say, 't is an awful enterprise ;
 But you believe I shall go through with it : 340
 'T is like you, and I thank you. Thank him
 for me,
 Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
 Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint

Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive
them

A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews 345

Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

Festus. Not that blest time—not our youth's
time, dear God !

Paracelsus. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is
done since,

And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,

How calm, how well ! yes, it is true, all true ; 350

All quackery ; all deceit ; myself can laugh

The first at it, if you desire : but still

You know the obstacles which taught me tricks

So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,

Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,

Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk 355

To humour men the way they most approved ?

My cheats were never palmed on such as you,

Dear *Festus* ! I will kneel if you require me,

Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,

Explain its bounded nature, and avow

My insufficiency—whate'er you will :

I give the fight up : let there be an end,

A privacy, an obscure nook for me.

I want to be forgotten even by God.

But if that cannot be, dear *Festus*, lay me,

When I shall die, within some narrow grave,

Not by itself—for that would be too proud—

But where such graves are thickest ; let it look

Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,

So that the peasant at his brother's bed

May tread upon my own and know it not ;

And we shall all be equal at the last,

Or classed according to life's natural ranks,

Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor

wise,

375

Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say, " He lived
 " Too much advanced before his brother men ;
 " They kept him still in front : 't was for their
 good

" But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
 " That he should tell God he had never ranked 380
 " With men : so, here at least he is a man."

Festus. That God shall take thee to his breast,
 dear spirit,

Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
 Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
 Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care 385
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
 The source of day ? Their theft shall be their
 bale :

For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones 390
 And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator !
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
 With which thy deeds were born, would scorn
 as well

The sheet of winding subterraneous fire 395
 Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
 Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
 Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
 Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
 Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
 Thou so august. I recognize thee first ; 400
 I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
 And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
 My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
 And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest. 405

Paracelsus. Festus !

Festus. I am for noble Aureole, God !

PARACELSIUS

PART V

I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
 His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
 I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
 As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
 Reward ! If thou canst find no place for him,
 He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
 His slave for ever. There are two of us.

410

Paracelsus. Dear Festus !

Festus. Here, dear Aureole ! ever by you !

Paracelsus. Nay, speak on, or I dream again.

Speak on !

415

Some story, anything—only your voice.

I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Festus. Thus the Mayne glideth

Where my Love abideth.

Sleep 's no softer : it proceeds

420

On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,

Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage

Bears not on its shaven ledge

425

Aught but weeds and waving grasses

To view the river as it passes,

Save here and there a scanty patch

Of primroses too faint to catch

A weary bee.

430

Paracelsus. More, more ; say on !

Festus. And scarce it pushes

Its gentle way through strangling rushes

Where the glossy kingfisher

Flutters when noon-heats are near,

Glad the shelving banks to shun,

435

Red and steaming in the sun,

Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat

Burrows, and the speckled stoat ;

Where the quick sandpipers flit

In and out the marl and grit 440
 That seems to breed them, brown as they :
 Nought disturbs its quiet way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill 445
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Paracelsus. My heart ! they loose my heart,
 those simple words ;
 Its darkness passes, which nought else could
 touch :
 Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low. 450
 What were you doing when your voice broke through
 A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !
 Are you alone here ?

Festus. All alone : you know me ?
 This cell ?

Paracelsus. An unexceptionable vault :
 Good brick and stone : the bats kept out, the rats 455
 Kept in : a snug nook : how should I mistake it ?

Festus. But wherefore am I here ?

Paracelsus. Ah, well remembered !
 Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !
 'T is like me : here I trifle while time fleets,
 And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return. 460
 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
 God's message ; but I have so much to say,
 I fear to leave half out. All is confused
 No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn in time.
 He would not else have brought you here : no doubt 465
 I shall see clearer soon.

Festus. Tell me but this—
 You are not in despair ?

Paracelsus. I ? and for what ?

Festus. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as I feared !

Paracelsus. What is it you would ask me with
that earnest
Dear searching face ?

Festus. How feel you, Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Well : 470

Well. 'T is a strange thing : I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.

I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—

Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less 475

A partner of its motion and mixed up

With its career. The hurricane is spent,

And the good boat speeds through the brighten-
ing weather ;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below ?

The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn 480

With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore ;

And now some islet, loosened from the land,

Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean ;

And now the air is full of uptorn canes,

Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks 485

Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,

All high in the wind. Even so my varied life

Drifts by me ; I am young, old, happy, sad,

Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,

And all at once : that is, those past conditions 490

Float back at once on me. If I select

Some special epoch from the crowd, 't is but

To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,

And only that particular state is present

With all its long-forgotten circumstance

495

Distinct and vivid as at first—myself

A careless looker-on and nothing more,

Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.

And this is death : I understand it all.

New being waits me ; new perceptions must

500

Be born in me before I plunge therein ;
 Which last is Death's affair ; and while I speak,
 Minute by minute he is filling me
 With power ; and while my foot is on the threshold
 Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet, 505
 All preparations not complete within—
 I turn new knowledge upon old events,
 And the effect is . . . but I must not tell ;
 It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
 One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me. 510

Festus. 'T is of that past life that I burn to hear.

Paracelsus. You wonder it engages me just now ?
 In truth, I wonder too. What 's life to me ?
 Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
 Music, and where I tend bliss evermore. 515
 Yet how can I refrain ? 'T is a refined
 Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
 I am so near the perils I escape,
 That I must play with them and turn them over,
 To feel how fully they are past and gone. 520
 Still, it is like, some further cause exists
 For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose ;
 Did I not tell you something of it, Festus ?
 I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
 Away from me ; it will return anon. 525

Festus. (Indeed his cheek seems young again,
 his voice

Complete with its old tones : that little laugh
 Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
 As though one stooped above his head to whom
 He looked for confirmation and approval, 530
 Where was it gone so long, so well preserved ?
 Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
 Like one who traces in an open book
 The matter he declares ; 't is many a year
 Since I remarked it last : and this in him, 535

But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity ?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .

540

Paracelsus. Ha, the purpose : the true purpose :
that is it !

How could I fail to apprehend ! You here,
I thus ! But no more trifling : I see all,
I know all : my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling ! Stay ; this posture 545
Hardly befits one thus about to speak :
I will arise.

Festus. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?
You cannot leave your couch.

Paracelsus. No help ; no help ;
Not even your hand. So ! there, I stand once more !
Speak from a couch ? I never lectured thus. 550
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur ; now put
The chain about my neck ; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so ;
Last, my good sword ; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time ?
This couch shall be my throne : I bid these walls 555
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Festus. I am dumb with wonder.

Paracelsus. Listen, therefore, Festus ! 560
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus ; very happy.

Festus. 'T is no delusion which uplifts him thus ! 565
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin ?

Paracelsus. Ay, pardoned : yet why pardoned ?
Festus. 'T is God's praise

That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Paracelsus. Have lived !

We have to live alone to set forth well

God's praise. 'T is true, I sinned much, as I
 thought,

570

And in effect need mercy, for I strove

To do that very thing ; but, do your best

Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.

Pardon from him, because of praise denied—

Who calls me to himself to exalt himself ?

575

He might laugh as I laugh !

Festus. But all comes

To the same thing. 'T is fruitless for mankind

To fret themselves with what concerns them not ;

They are no use that way : they should lie down

Content as God has made them, nor go mad

580

In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Paracelsus. No, no ; mistake me not ; let me
 not work

More harm than I have worked ! This is my
 case :

If I go joyous back to God, yet bring

No offering, if I render up my soul

585

Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,

If I appear the better to love God

For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—

Be not deceived ! It may be surely thus

With me, while higher prizes still await

590

The mortal persevering to the end.

Beside I am not all so valueless :

I have been something, though too soon I left

Following the instincts of that happy time.

Festus. What happy time ? For God's sake,
 for man's sake,

595

What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?

Paracelsus. When but the time I vowed myself
to man?

Festus. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!

Paracelsus. Yes, it was in me; I was born for
it—

600

I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.

Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;

Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours 605

For fit delights to stay its longings vast;

And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame

Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,

Grow in demand, still craving more and more, 610

And make each joy conceded prove a pledge

Of other joy to follow—bating nought

Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence

To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung

As an extreme, last boon, from destiny, 615

Into occasion for new covetings,

New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong
soul,

Alone, unaided might attain to this,

So glorious is our nature, so august

Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,

His naked spirit so majestical!

But this was born in me; I was made so;

Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,

The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed

Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,

Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears

Were saved me; thus I entered on my course.

620

625

You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble ; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon 630
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race ; save for that doubt, 635
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To stand : the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift 640
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power 645
Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is he :
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere 650
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face ;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks, 655
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate, 660
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—

God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.

Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod : 665

But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes

Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure

Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between

The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,

Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ; 670

The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln
with blooms

Like chrysalids impatient for the air,

The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run

Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;

Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark 675

Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;

Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls

Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe

Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek

Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews 680

His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,

From life's minute beginnings, up at last

To man—the consummation of this scheme

Of being, the completion of this sphere

Of life : whose attributes had here and there 685

Been scattered o'er the visible world before,

Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant

To be united in some wondrous whole,

Imperfect qualities throughout creation,

Suggesting some one creature yet to make, 690

Some point where all those scattered rays should
meet

Convergent in the faculties of man.

Power—neither put forth blindly, nor controlled

Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used

At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear : 695

Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow

Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,

Strengthened by love : love—not serenely pure,
 But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed
 buds

700

And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
 Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
 And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
 And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust :—

705

Hints and previsions of which faculties,
 Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
 The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
 All shape out dimly the superior race,
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
 And man appears at last. So far the seal
 Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,
 One scheme wound up : and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light,

710

Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
 Each back step in the circle. Not alone
 For their possessor dawn those qualities,
 But the new glory mixes with the heaven
 And earth ; man, once descried, imprints for ever
 His presence on all lifeless things : the winds
 Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
 A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
 Never a senseless gust now man is born.

715

The herded pines commune and have deep
 thoughts,

A secret they assemble to discuss
 When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
 Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
 Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
 Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
 Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
 That let light in upon the gloomy woods,

720

725

A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.

The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,

735

Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn

Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :

—And this to fill us with regard for man.

With apprehension of his passing worth,

Desire to work his proper nature out,

740

And ascertain his rank and final place,

For these things tend still upward, progress is

The law of life, man is not Man as yet.

Nor shall I deem his object served, his end

Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,

745

While only here and there a star dispels

The darkness, here and there a towering mind

O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host

Is out at once to the despair of night,

When all mankind alike is perfected,

750

Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,

I say, begins man's general infancy.

For wherefore make account of feverish starts

Of restless members of a dormant whole,

Impatient nerves which quiver while the body

755

Slumbers as in a grave ? Oh long ago

The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,

The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered speech

Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,

The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand
clenched stronger,

760

As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;

The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep !

But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,

Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,

He shall start up and stand on his own earth,

765

Then shall his long triumphant march begin,

Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.

When all the race is perfected alike

As man, that is ; all tended to mankind, 770

And, man produced, all has its end thus far :

But in completed man begins anew

A tendency to God. Prognostics told

Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise

August anticipations, symbols, types 775

Of a dim splendour ever on before

In that eternal circle life pursues.

For men begin to pass their nature's bound,

And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant

Their proper joys and griefs ; they grow too great 780

For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade

Before the unmeasured thirst for good : while peace

Rises within them ever more and more.

Such men are even now upon the earth,

Serene amid the half-formed creatures round 785

Who should besaved by them and joined with them.

Such was my task, and I was born to it—

Free, as I said but now, from much that chains

Spirits, high dowered but limited and vexed

By a divided and delusive aim, 790

A shadow mocking a reality

Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse

The flitting mimic called up by itself,

And so remains perplexed and nigh put out

By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam. 795

I, from the first, was never cheated thus ;

I never fashioned out a fancied good

Distinct from man's ; a service to be done,

A glory to be ministered unto

With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn 800

From labouring in his behalf ; a strength

Denied that might avail him. I cared not

Lest his success ran counter to success
 Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
 And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.

805

Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
 I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind.
 Power ; I could not take my eyes from that :
 That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased

810

At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
 The sign and note and character of man.
 I saw no use in the past : only a scene
 Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
 The record of disgraces best forgotten,

815

A sullen page in human chronicles
 Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
 Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
 Or why his annals should be forced to tell
 That once the tide of light, about to break
 Upon the world, was sealed within its spring :
 I would have had one day, one moment's space,
 Change man's condition, push each slumbering

820

claim

Of mastery o'er the elemental world
 At once to full maturity, then roll
 Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
 What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child

825

Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
 Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
 By which thou hast the earth : for thee the present
 Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen

830

Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
 Its brightness shall stand out : nor yet on thee
 Shall burst the future, as successive zones
 Of several wonder open on some spirit

Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven :
 But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,

835

While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man !
 All this was hid from me : as one by one

My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
 As actual good within my reach decreased, 840
 While obstacles sprung up this way and that
 To keep me from effecting half the sum,
 Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within
 The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
 Itself a match for my concentrated strength— 845
 What wonder if I saw no way to shun
 Despair ? The power I sought for man, seemed
 God's.

In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
 A strange adventure made me know, one sin
 Had spotted my career from its uprise ; 850
 I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !

And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
 His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
 I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
 Taught me the worth of love in man's estate, 855
 And what proportion love should hold with power
 In his right constitution ; love preceding
 Power, and with much power, always much more
 love ;

Love still too straitened in his present means,
 And earnest for new power to set love free. 860

I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :
 And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
 And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
 When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge 865
 For past credulity in casting shame
 On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
 It was not strange I saw no good in man,
 To overbalance all the wear and waste
 Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born 870
 To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
 In my own heart love had not been made wise
 To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,

To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
 To see a good in evil, and a hope 875
 In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud
 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
 Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
 Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ;
 All with a touch of nobleness, despite 880
 Their error, upward tending all though weak,
 Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
 But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
 And do their best to climb and get to him.
 All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men 885
 Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
 Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth a third
 And better-tempered spirit, warned by both :
 As from the over-radiant star too mad
 To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself— 890
 And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
 Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
 A temperate and equidistant world.
 Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
 As yet men cannot do without contempt ; 895
 'T is for their good, and therefore fit awhile
 That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
 Rather than praise the strong and true, in me :
 But after, they will know me. If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud, 900
 It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
 Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.
 You understand me ? I have said enough ?
Festus. Now die, dear Aureole !
Paracelsus. Festus, let my hand— 905
 This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend !
 Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Festus. And this was Paracelsus !

NOTE

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling ; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus ; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

“ PARACELSIUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln,(¹) a little town in the canton of Schwyz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta : consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age ; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim,(²) and many German bishops.

“ As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools : he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France and Italy ; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied him-

* I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. “ Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue executum ferunt: constat imberbam illum, mulierumque osorem fuisse.” A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish at Melander's “ Jocoseria,” etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatulus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. “ Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit.” (*De Medicina Nova*.)

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self long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

"Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone.⁽³⁾ He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania ; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeys as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown : it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of G^Ecolampadius,⁽⁴⁾ to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latchets of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians ; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head ; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. 'You shall follow me,' cried he, 'you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,* and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish ; you who inhabit the isles of the sea ; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians ; thou, Arab ; thou, Greek ; thou, Jew : all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.' †

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of

* Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "mirum quod non et Garantos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere,"—that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging "Angulum quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem."

† See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen :—Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter." "And why not?" (he asks, as he well might). "Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me : but we are at least a match for you.—Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universae academiæ. Prodigie, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem." (*Frag. Med.*)

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intoxication : if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes ; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about ; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water.⁽⁶⁾

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,⁽⁶⁾ he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.* Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528 ; at Nuremberg in 1529 ; at St. Gall in 1531 ; at Pfeffers in 1535 ; and at Augsburg in 1536 : he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna ; from thence he passed into Hungary ; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his *Chronicle* to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim* ; Einsiedeln is the Latinized Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita ; Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia ; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Heribopolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolaæ Familiares*, Hag. 1536 : among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn : "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cenobio tuo apud Heribopolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissetus," etc.

(3) "Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et recon-

* "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets . in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."

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ditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed Mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supposebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret." (Bitiskius in *Præfat.*) "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem." (Melch. Adam in *Vit. Germ. Medic.*) "Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfectaque videtur." (*Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.*) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel foeminae aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cuiuslibet tædii pigebit?" etc. (*Defensiones Septem adversus œmulos suos*, 1573. Def. 4ta. "De peregrinationibus et exilio.")

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Ecolampadius, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melanchthon at Marpurg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D.D. Johannis Ecolampadii et Huldrichi Zuinglii Epistolarum*, lib. quatuor, Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of Ecolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—"About this time arose out of Luther's school one Ecolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years." (*Life of Bishop Fisher*, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d'Homini Letterati*, Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quenstedt (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est." Delrio, in his *Disquisit.*

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Magicar., classes him among those “partim atheos, partim hæreticos” (lib. i. cap. 3). “Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olenit, ac duriuscula sonant in auribus vere Christiani.” (*D. Gabrielis Claudiari Schediasma de Tinct.*, Univ. Norimb. 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—“Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleus recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hærere.” (Th. Erastus, *Disputat. de Med. Nova.*) These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, “longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret.”

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: “Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ coœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum.” (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: “Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus saepè narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclave ad columnam τετυφωμένος adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cuius κολωμα hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginations aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant.” (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

Volpone, act. ii. scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hudibras, part ii. cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply “*laudanum suum*.” But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—“Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ procitus a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam authoritatis summae in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo

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stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus a foeda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinæque sanitati restitut ; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium." (Bitiskius.)* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery : " Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi pœnitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant." For these " bites" of Oporinus, see *Disputat. Erasti*, and *Andreae Jocisci, Oratio de Vit. ob. Opor.*; for the " remorse," *Mic. Toxita* in pref. *Testamenti*, and *Conringius* (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, *De Philos^a et Philos^{um} sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, " De Chymia"—" Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus." I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise *De Phlebotomia*, and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart ; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work *De Natura Rerum*, on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough : he adds, " though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius." See Holcroft's translation, vol. iii. p. 179—" The Eyes." While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in *Praefat. in Paramyr.*) declares " quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." " O fœcunditas ingenii !" adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious ; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) " rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus." The rest were " charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ : the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries :— " Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas : vitæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur." (Gabrielis Claudiéri Schediasma.)

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—*Hermetis etc. Sapientia vindicata*, 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

PARACELSIUS

illo quam obtentum." "Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt," says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ*, Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*, Arg. 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac.*, Franc. 1584; and *P. Philos. Compendium cum scholius auctore Leone Suavio*, Paris. (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the "*laudanum*" of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, "Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinoris nebulonibus obitur et administratur?")—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—"Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit," *honoravit*, or *orituravit*—for accounts differ.

SORDELLO

VOL. I

M

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON

DEAR FRIEND,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many ; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either ? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since ; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like : but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires ; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul : little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so ; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON : June 9, 1863.

SORDELLO

1840

BOOK THE FIRST

WHO will, may hear Sordello's story told :
His story ? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me : for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe ?

Appears

Verona . . . Never,—I should warn you first,—
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,
And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit

5

10

15

20

More in the secret than yourselves who sit
 Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
 Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
 Makers of quite new men, producing them,
 Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem
 The wearer's quality ; or take their stand,
 Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
 Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
 Summoned together from the world's four ends,
 Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,
 To hear the story I propose to tell.

Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick, 35
 Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,
 And shaming her ; 't is not for fate to choose
 Silence or song because she can refuse

Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake : 40
 I have experienced something of her spite ;
 But there 's a realm wherein she has no right
 And I have many lovers. Say, but few
 Friends fate accords me ? Here they are : now view
 The host I muster ! Many a lighted face
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ; 45
 What else should tempt them back to taste our air
 Except to see how their successors fare ?

My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly man
 Striving to look as living as he can,
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I 'll not fret
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean
 The living in good earnest—ye elect 50
 Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
 Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
 To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,

Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not near
Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face !
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for thee !
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
Braying a Pérsian shield,—the silver speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear ! What
heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies ?

75

Lo, the past is hurled
In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. 'T is six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled :
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group ; and not a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way

80

85

90

It worked while each grew drunk ! Men grave
and grey

Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro, 95
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow

About the hollows where a heart should be ;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood

At the fierce news : for, be it understood, 100
Envoy apprised Verona that her prince

Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since
A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust

Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat 105

Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.

Immediate succour from the Lombard League 110
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !

Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.
‘ Prone is the purple pavis ; Este makes 115

“ Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
“ To play the Ecelin ; as if it cost

“ Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
“ Like his ! The patron tells ye, once for all,

“ There be sound reasons that preferment fall 120
“ On our beloved ” . . .

“ Duke o' the Rood, why not ? ”

Shouted an Estian, “ grudge ye such a lot ?
“ The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,

“ Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,
“ That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts, 125

“ And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.”

“ Taurello,” quoth an envoy, “ as in wane

- “ Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
 “ To fly but forced the earth his couch to make
 “ Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake, 130
 “ Waits he the Kaiser’s coming ; and as yet
 “ That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps : but let
 “ Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
 “ The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
 “ The sea it means to cross because of him. 135
 “ Sinketh the breeze ? His hope-sick eye grows
 dim ;
 “ Creep closer on the creature ! Every day
 “ Strengthens the Pontiff ; Ecelin, they say,
 “ Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
 “ Telling upon his perished finger-tips 140
 “ How many ancestors are to depose
 “ Ere he be Satan’s Viceroy when the doze
 “ Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
 “ Their houses ; not a drop of blood was spilt
 “ When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet 145
 “ Buccio Virtù—God’s wafer, and the street
 “ Is narrow ! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
 “ With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm !
 “ This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
 “ To Padua, Podestà, ‘with pure intent,’ 150
 “ Said he, ‘my presence, judged the single bar
 “ To permanent tranquillity, may jar
 “ ‘No longer’—so ! his back is fairly turned ?
 “ The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
 “ The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh,
 drunk 155
 “ A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk
 “ In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange
 way,
 “ Old Salinguerra back again—I say,
 “ Old Salinguerra in the town once more
 “ Uprooting, overturning, flame before, 160

" Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled ;
 " Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
 " Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
 " He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,
 " Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce 165
 " Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
 " On the gorged bird. The burghers ground
 their teeth
 " To see troop after troop encamp beneath
 " I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
 " It took so many patient months to snatch 170
 " Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
 " Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls
 " A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war !'
 " Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
 " Agrees to enter for the kindest ends 175
 " Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
 " No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
 " Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
 " Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog ;
 " 'Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the catalogue 180
 " 'Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello
 shows
 " 'Not the least sign of life'—whereat arose
 " A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?
 " I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
 " Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on, 185
 " Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
 " Into the trap!—"

Six hundred years ago !

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills 190
 His sprawling path through letters anciently
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,

Flung John of Brienne's favour from his casque,
 Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
 Was excommunicate that very year.

195

"The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!"
 Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the
 strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
 Its cry : what cry ?

200

"The Emperor to come!"
 His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears,
 shields,
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,
 And carried it, till now, with little care—
 Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut
 Us longer?—cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
 Which nought save such another throe can wrest
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
 Too sure to over-riot and confound
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself,
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused
 For that!—sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,

205

210

215

220

225

So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood
 O'er every cluster of the multitude
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents 230
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth
 Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :
 “The Pope, for us the People, who begun
 “The People, carries on the People thus, 235
 “To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !”
 See you ?

Or say, Two Principles that live
 Each fitly by its Representative.
 “Hill-cat”—who called him so ?—the gracefulest
 Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest 240
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
 Those talons to their sheath !) whose velvet purr
 Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout
 —Arpo or Yoland, is it ?—one without
 A country or a name, presumes to couch 245
 Beside their noblest ; until men avouch
 That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
 Conrad descries no fitter, rear or vain,
 Than Ecelo ! They laughed as they enrolled
 That name at Milan on the page of gold, 250
 Godego's lord,—Ramon, Marostica,
 Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief !
 No laughter when his son, “the Lombard Chief”
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent 255
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sadness now—
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills 260
 Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay

Among and care about them ; day by day
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
 A castle building to defend a cot,
 A cot built for a castle to defend,
 Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
 To boasts how mountain ridge may join with
 ridge

265

By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
 He takes, in brief, a figure that besems
 The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,

270

—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
 From its old interests, and nowise changed
 By its new neighbourhood : perchance the vaunt
 Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
 "Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in
 A son as cruel ; and this Ecelin

275

Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall
 And curling and compliant ; but for all
 Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
 Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek

280

Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-
 flesh went

To feed : whereas Romano's instrument,
 Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole

I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole
 Successively, why should not he shed blood

285

To further a design ? Men understood
 Living was pleasant to him as he wore
 His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,
 Propped on his truncheon in the public way,
 While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,

290

Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face

Our Azzo, our Guelf Lion ! Why disgrace
 A worthiness conspicuous near and far
 (Atii at Rome while free and consular,

- Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun) 295
 By trumpeting the Church's princely son ?
 —Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
 Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,
 Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk
 Found it intolerable to be sunk 300
 (Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
 Quite out of summer while alive and well :
 Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
 'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
 Striving to coax from his decrepit brains 305
 The reason Father Porphyry took pains
 To blot those ten lines out which used to stand
 First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
- The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
 Was vested in a certain Twenty-four ; 310
 And while within his palace these debate
 Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
 Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
 Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
 For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut 315
 The smother in, the lights, all noises but
 The carroch's booming : safe at last ! Why
 strange
- Such a recess should lurk behind a range
 Of banquet rooms? Your finger—thus—you push
 A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush 320
 Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
 Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
 Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear
 A preconcerted signal to appear ;
 Or if you simply crouch with beating heart, 325
 Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
 To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now ;
 Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow
 The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er ?

What woman stood beside him? not the more 330
 Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
 Because that arras fell between! Her wise
 And lulling words are yet about the room,
 Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
 Down even to her vesture's creeping stir. 335
 And so reclines he, saturate with her,
 Until an outcry from the square beneath
 Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe
 Above the cunning element, and shakes
 The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks 340
 On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
 The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
 Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
 Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
 In his wool wedding-robe.

For he—for he, 345
 Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,
 (If I should falter now)—for he is thine!
 Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
 A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
 Relentless into the consummate orb 350
 That scared it from its right to roll along
 A sempiternal path with dance and song
 Fulfilling its allotted period,
 Serenest of the progeny of God—
 Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops 355
 With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank
 troop
 Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
 Utterly with thee, its shy element
 Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
 Still, what if I approach the august sphere 360
 Named now with only one name, disentwine
 That under-current soft and argentine
 From its fierce mate in the majestic mass

Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
 In John's transcendent vision,—launch once more 365
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
 Where glutted hell disgorgheth filthiest gloom,
 Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—
 Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
 Into a darkness quieted by hope ; 370
 Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
 In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,—
 I would do this ! If I should falter now !

In Mantua territory half is slough,
 Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet oaks 375
 Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes
 With sand the summer through : but 't is morass
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
 Some thirty years before this evening's coil,
 One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil, 380
 Goito ; just a castle built amid
 A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid
 Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound
 The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,
 Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress, 385
 Secure beside in its own loveliness,
 So peered with airy head, below, above,
 The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
 To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.
 A maze of corridors contrived for sin, 390
 Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
 You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last
 A maple-panelled room : that haze which seems
 Floating about the panel, if there gleams
 A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold 395
 And in light-graven characters unfold
 The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what shade
 Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,
 Cut like a company of palms to prop

The roof, each kissing top entwined with top, 400
 Leaning together ; in the carver's mind
 Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined
 With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair
 Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear
 A vintage ; graceful sister-palms ! But quick 405
 To the main wonder, now. A vault, see ; thick
 Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits
 Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—
 A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group 410
 Round it,—each side of it, where'er one sees,—
 Upholds it ; shrinking Caryatides
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
 Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
 First pulse of life shot brightening the snow. 415
 The font's edge burthenes every shoulder, so
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ;
 Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale, 420
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
 Like priestesses because of sin impure 425
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
 And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same 430
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
 Gold seven timesglobed; surely our maiden shrinks
 And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain 435

Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain
 Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?
 Then with a step more light, a heart more large, 440
 He may depart, leave her and every one
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'T is the tale I mean
 To tell you.

445

In this castle may be seen,
 On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,
 Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
 A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile
 Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile 450
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk
 ('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)
 Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light 455
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
 —Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
 And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
 Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives, 460
 Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
 —Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall
 trace

(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive 465
 Delight at every sense ; you can believe
 Sordello foremost in the regal class
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames

Some happy lands, that have luxurious names, 470
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air
 Half-germinating spices ; mere decay
 Produces richer life ; and day by day
 New pollen on the lily-petal grows, 475
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
 You recognize at once the finer dress
 Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
 At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
 (As though she would not trust them with her world) 480
 A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
 And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
 How can such love ?—like souls on each full-
 fraught
 Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
 Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love 485
 Becomes an aching weight ; and, to remove
 A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude
 Their finding out themselves can work no good
 To what they love nor make it very blest
 By their endeavour,—they are fain invest 490
 The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
 Availing it to purpose, to control,
 To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
 And separate interests that may employ
 That beauty fitly, for its proper sake. 495
 Nor rest they here ; fresh births of beauty wake
 Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
 With every mode of loveliness : then cast
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
 Before a coming glory. Up and down 500
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
 To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—
 And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod ;
 Visibly through his garden walketh God.

So fare they. Now revert. One character 505
 Denotes them through the progress and the stir,—
 A need to blend with each external charm,
 Bury themselves, the whole heartwide and warm,—
 In something not themselves ; they would belong
 To what they worship—stronger and more strong 510
 Thus prodigally fed—which gathers shape
 And feature, soon imprisons past escape
 The votary framed to love and to submit
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs 515
 A legend ; light had birth ere moons and suns,
 Flowing through space a river and alone,
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown
 Hither and thither, foundering and blind :
 When into each of them rushed light—to find 520
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
 Let such forego their just inheritance !
 For there 's a class that eagerly looks, too,
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
 Proclaims each new revealment born a twin 525
 With a distinctest consciousness within,
 Referring still the quality, now first
 Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct nursed
 In silence, now remembered better, shown
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own ; 530
 A dream come true ; the special exercise
 Of any special function that implies
 The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
 Dormant within their nature all along—
 Whose fault ? So, homage, other souls direct 535
 Without, turns inward. "How should this deject
 "Thee, soul?" they murmur ; "wherefore
 strength be quelled
 "Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
 "Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,

“ Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
 540
 “ Like thine—existence cannot satiate,
 “ Cannot surprise ? Laugh thou at envious fate,
 “ Who, from earth’s simplest combination stamp’t
 “ With individuality—uncrampt
 “ By living its faint elemental life,
 545
 “ Dost soar to heaven’s completest essence, rife
 “ With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
 “ Equal to being all ! ”

In truth ? Thou hast
 Life, then—wilt challenge life for us : our race
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place
 550
 In thy ascent, the first of us ; whom we
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,
 With our more bounded wills ?

Ah, but to find
 A certain mood enervate such a mind,
 Counsel it slumber in the solitude
 Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind’s
 555
 good

Its nature just as life and time accord
 “ —Too narrow an arena to reward
 “ Emprise—the world’s occasion worthless since
 “ Not absolutely fitted to evince
 560
 “ Its mastery ! ” Or if yet worse befall,
 And a desire possess it to put all
 That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
 Contain it,—to display completely here
 The mastery another life should learn,
 565
 Thrusting in time eternity’s concern,—
 So that Sordello. . . .

Fool, who spied the mark
 Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
 Already as he loiters ? Born just now,
 With the new century, beside the glow
 And efflorescence out of barbarism ;

Witness a Greek or two from the abyss
 That stray through Florence-town with studious air,

Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair :
 If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet ! 575
 While at Siena is Guidone set,
 Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be
 Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
 Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
 At the moon : look you ! The same orange haze,— 580
 The same blue stripe round that—and, in the midst,
 Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
 Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth
 The leprosy confirmed and ruinous 585
 To spirit lodged in a contracted house !
 Go back to the beginning, rather ; blend
 It gently with Sordello's life ; the end
 Is piteous, you may see, but much between
 Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen 590
 The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
 The goblin ! So they found at Babylon,
 (Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
 Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
 In rummaging among the rarities, 595
 A certain coffer ; he who made the prize
 Opened it greedily ; and out there curled
 Just such another plague, for half the world
 Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,
 Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot 600
 Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid
 Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
 Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
 And how he never could remember when 605

- He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
 About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
 Glided his youth away ; beyond the glades
 On the fir-forest border, and the rim
 Of the low range of mountain, was for him 610
 No other world : but this appeared his own
 To wander through at pleasure and alone.
 The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide
 Might he disport ; only the northern side
 Lay under a mysterious interdict— 615
 Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
 His roaming to the corridors, the vault
 Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,
 The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
 And nests, and breezy parapet that looks 620
 Over the woods to Mantua : there he strolled.
 Some foreign women-servants, very old,
 Tended and crept about him—all his clue
 To the world's business and embroiled ado
 Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most. 625
 And first a simple sense of life engrossed
 Sordello in his drowsy Paradise ;
 The day's adventures for the day suffice—
 Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
 With sleep and stir in healthy interchange, 630
 Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
 Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
 Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
 And, when September finds them sere or scant,
 Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite, 635
 And hies him after unforeseen delight.
 So fed Sordello, not a shard dissheathed ;
 As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
 Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
 His admiration, bent on making fine 640
 Its novel friend at any risk, would fling

In gay profusion forth : a ficklest king,
 Confessed those minions !—eager to dispense
 So much from his own stock of thought and sense
 As might enable each to stand alone
 And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,
 Joining the qualities that just before
 Had graced some older favourite. Thus they
 wore

645

A fluctuating halo, yesterday
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched away,—
 Those upland objects each of separate name,
 Each with an aspect never twice the same,
 Waxing and waning as the new-born host
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
 A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine patch
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch
 The day those archers wound along the vines—
 Related to the Chief that left their lines

655

To climb with clinking step the northern stair
 Up to the solitary chambers where
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;
 He o'er-festooning every interval,
 As the adventurous spider, making light

660

Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to
 height,

665

From barbican to battlement : so flung
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
 Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh
 Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.

670

This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
 To laying such a spangled fabric low
 Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
 But its abundant will was baulked here : doubt

675

Rose tardily in one so fenced about
 From most that nurtures judgment,—care and
 pain :

Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
 Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force
 Stead us, diverted from our natural course
 Of joys—contrive some yet amid the dearth,
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth
 Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense
 However feeble ; what informed the boy
 Others desired a portion in his joy ?

680

Or say a Ruthful chance broke woof and warp—
 A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
 A bird with unsoled breast and unfilmed eyes
 Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance
 Lapping Sordello ? Not a circumstance
 That makes for you, friend Naddo ! Eat fern-seed
 And peer beside us and report indeed
 If (your word) “genius” dawnd with throes and
 stings

685

And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs,
 Summers, and winters quietly came and went.

695

Time put at length that period to content,
 By right the world should have imposed : bereft
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left
 To study his companions, managed rip
 Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
 Core with its crust, their nature with his own :
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.

700

As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery
 Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane
 Lay bare. That's gone: yet why renounce, for that

705

SORDELLO

BOOK I

His disenchanted tributaries—flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy :—why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?
The new-born judgment answered, “little boots
“Beholding other creatures' attributes
“And having none!” or, say that it sufficed,
“Yet, could one but possess, oneself,” (enticed
Judgment) “some special office !” Nought beside
Serves you ? “Well then, be somehow justified
“For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
“And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe
“Of actual pleasures : what, now, from without
“Effects it?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,
“Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ?
“That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
“The better for them ?” Thus much craved his
soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true ; if sure of nought beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below :
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more
Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,

And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
So, they must ever live before a crowd :
—“Vanity,” Naddo tells you.

745

Whence contrive

A crowd, now ? From these women just alive,
That archer-troop ? Forth glided—not alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her eyes,
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise) 755

—But the entire out-world : whatever, scraps
And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Not counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other,—such now dared to stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned 760
A sort of human life : at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff
To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough : 770
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?
Are they to simply testify the ways
He who convoked them sends his soul along
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song ?
—While they live each his life, boast each his own 775
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
In some one point where something dearest loved
Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !

750

755

760

765

770

775

No simple and self-evident delights, 780
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,
 Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
 Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
 By this, the sudden company—loves prized
 By those who are to prize his own amount
 Of loves. Once care because such make account, 785
 Allow that foreign recognitions stamp
 The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
 Him counterfeits enough; and so their print
 Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint, 790
 And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal
 Is made to: if their casual print conceal—
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
 What he has lived without, nor felt the loss—
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome, 795
 —What matter? So must speech expand the dumb
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
 Whom no poor woodland-sights could satiate,
 Betakes himself to study hungrily
 Just what the puppets his crude phantasy 800
 Supposes notablest,—popes, kings, priests,
 knights,—
 May please to promulgate for appetites;
 Accepting all their artificial joys
 Not as he views them, but as he employs
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock 805
 Of attributes, whereon—a marshalled flock
 Of authorized enjoyments—he may spend
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
 With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else
 'T were mockery: for instance, "How excels 810
 "My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the youth
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
 Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent
 "Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent

- “ Deliciously amid my girls to sleep. 815
- “ What if he stalks the Trentine-pass ? Yon steep
- “ I climbed an hour ago with little toil :
- “ We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
- “ The Guelf’s paid stabber, carelessly afford
- “ Saint Mark’s a spectacle, the sleight o’ the sword 820
- “ Baffling the treason in a moment ? ” Here
- No rescue ! Poppy he is none, but peer
To Ecelin, assuredly : his hand,
- Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand
- With Ecelin’s success—try, now ! He soon 825
- Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
- From earth ; left each abortive boy’s-attempt
- For feats, from failure happily exempt,
- In fancy at his beck. “ One day I will
- “ Accomplish it ! Are they not older still 830
- “ —Not grown-up men and women ? ’T is beside
- “ Only a dream ; and though I must abide
- “ With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
- “ For all myself, acquire an instrument
- “ For acting what these people act ; my soul 835
- “ Hunting a body out may gain its whole
- “ Desire some day ! ” How else express chagrin
- And resignation, show the hope steal in
- With which he let sink from an aching wrist
- The rough-hewn ash-bow ? Straight, a gold
shaft hissed 840
- Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
- Superbly ! “ Crosses to the breach ! God’s Town
- “ Is gained him back ! ” Why bend rough ash-
bows more ?
- Thus lives he : if not careless as before,
Comforted : for one may anticipate, 845
- Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate
- Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
- Startle, real places of enormous fames,

Este abroad and Ecelin at home
 To worship him,—Mantua, Verona, Rome 850
 To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
 Rather test qualities to heart's content—
 Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—
 Compress the starriest into one star,
 And grasp the whole at once!

The pageant thinned 855

Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
 His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
 Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side
 The strong clave to the wise; with either classed
 The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed 860
 Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
 Themselves eventually,—graces loosed,
 Strengths lavished,—all to heighten up One Shape
 Whose potency no creature should escape.
 Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk? 865
 Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,
 Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine
 The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—
 Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,
 Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped, 870
 Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne
 sent

To keep in mind his sluggish armament
 Of Canaan:—Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce
 Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights trans-
 pierce

So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells 875
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are
 spells

On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
 Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood, 880

While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
 Like an escape of angels? 'T is the tune,
 Nor much unlike the words his women croon
 Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed 885
 Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Eglamor
 "Made that!" Half minstrel and half emperor,
 What but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew.
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue 890
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
 And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more, 895
 He had discovered, as our world before,
 Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
 The youth—what thefts of every clime and day
 Contributed to purfle the array 900
 He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine
 Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
 Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
 Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipped
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock— 905
 Though really on the stubs of living rock
 Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,
 Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
 Born of the simmering quiet, there to die. 910
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
 Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
 There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease.
 And, proud of its observer, straight the wood 915
 Tried old surprises on him; black it stood

A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)
 So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
 Must pass ; yet presently (the cloud dispatched) 920
 Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems !
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang
 White summer-lightnings ; as it sank and sprang
 To measure, that whole palpitating breast 925
 Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest
 Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest
 At eve to worship.

Time stole : by degrees

The Pythons perish off ; his votaries
 Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem
 Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem 930
 Emphatic ; only girls are very slow
 To disappear—his Delians ! Some that glow
 O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench ;
 Alike in one material circumstance— 935
 All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
 His Daphne ! "We secure Count Richard's
 voice
 "In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
 "As our Taurello," say his faded friends, 940
 "By granting him our Palma!"—the sole child,
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
 Wedded and turned him wicked : "but the maid
 "Rejects his suit," those sleepy women boast. 945
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
 Sordello : so, conspicuous in his world
 Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
 About her like a glory ! even the ground 950

Was bright as with spilt sunbeams ; breathe not,
breathe

Not !—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,

O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air, 955
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavily ; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
As but suspended in the act to rise

By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes 960
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.

Time fleets :

That 's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and
pale, 965

Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone
He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue matters not ;

—For ever, possibly ; since to the spot 970
None come : our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place disburthened of a care.

Strange—to be constant here if he is there !

Is it distrust ? Oh, never ! for they both 975
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth

Is daily manifest, with Azzo dumb
And Richard wavering : let but Friedrich come,
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report

—Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court 980
To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,

Northward to Provence that, and thus far south
The other! What a method to apprise 985
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies,
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records! and his performance makes a tour,
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout, 990
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse 995
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua: whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind. 1000

BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with snow : at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the
woods

"Our buried year, a witch, grew young again 5

"To placid incantations, and that stain

"About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent

"With those black pines"—so Eglamor gave event
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke

From his companion ; brother Naddo shook 10

The solemnest of brows : " Beware," he said,

" Of setting up conceits in nature's stead ! "

Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure

Palma, the visioned lady—only pass 15

O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,

Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks

Of withered fern with gold, into those walks

Of pine and take her ! Buoyantly he went.

Again his stooping forehead was besprent 20

With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then
wide

Opened the great morass, shot every side

With flashing water through and through; a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape divine,

Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced 25

Athwart the flying herons ? He advanced,

But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,

Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
 A diamond jet : and if he stopped to pick
 Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick, 30
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,
 A sudden pond would silently encroach
 This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge
 Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge
 Flushed, now, and panting,—crowds to see,—
 will own 35

She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still
 Opposes : but—the startling spectacle—
 Mantua, this time ! Under the walls—a crowd
 Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud 40
 Round a pavilion. How he stood !

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass : his youth
 In its prime now—and where was homage poured
 Upon Sordello ?—born to be adored,
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made 45
 To cope with any, cast into the shade
 By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight—a trick—
 And much would be explained. It went for
 nought—

The best of their endowments were ill bought 50
 With his identity : nay, the conceit,
 That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
 Was not so vain—list ! The word, “Palma !”

Steal
 Aside, and die, Sordello ; this is real,
 And this—abjure !

What next ? The curtains see 55
 Dividing ! She is there ; and presently
 He will be there—the proper You, at length—
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:

Most like, the very Boniface!

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced ; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
—“ This is not he,” Sordello felt ; while, “ Place
“ For the best Troubadour of Boniface ! ”
Hollaed the Jongleurs,—“ Eglamor, whose lay 65
“ Concludes his patron’s Court of Love to-day ! ”
Obsequious Naddo strung the master’s lute
With the new lute-string, “ Elys,” named to suit
The song : he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride : then up he struck. Sordello’s brain
Swam ; for he knew a sometime deed again ;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version—was the tale 70
Not of Apollo ? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
If the man dared no further ? Has he ceased
And, lo, the people’s frank applause half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other’s names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story ; word made leap 75
Out word, rhyme—rhyme ; the lay could barely
keep
Pace with the action visibly rushing past :
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full 80
His plague, who spied a scarab ’neath the tongue,
And found ’t was Apis’ flank his hasty prong

Insulted. But the people—but the cries,
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize !
 —For he had gained some prize. He seemed to
 shrink

95

Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
 One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
 Silent ; but at her knees the very maid
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
 The same pure fleecy hair ; one weft of which, 100
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
 She leant, speaking some six words and no more.
 He answered something, anything ; and she
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again 105
 Moved the arrested magic ; in his brain
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,
 And greater glare, until the intense flare
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
 And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence, 110
 At home ; the sun shining his ruddy wont ;
 The customary birds'-chirp ; but his front
 Was crowned—was crowned ! Her scented scarf
 around
 His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the
 ground ?

A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him 115
 Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
 Ready to talk—"The Jongleurs in a troop
 "Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe
 "And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a childhood spent
 "In taking, well for him, so brave a bent ! 120
 "Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead with
 spite,
 "And Palma chose him for her minstrel."

Light

Sordello rose—to think, now ; hitherto

He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
 Out of it all ! Best live from first to last 125
 The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
 Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
 From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
 Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
 Recounted an adventure, but began 130
 Imperfectly ; his own task was to fill
 The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,
 Supply the necessary points, set loose
 As many incidents of little use
 —More imbecile the other, not to see 135
 Their relative importance clear as he !
 But, for a special pleasure in the act
 Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
 From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit
 Of rapture to contrive a song of it ? 140
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find
 A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared
 By means of that mere snatch, to many a hoard
 Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears soft 145
 The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause
 Why such performance should exact applause
 From men, if they had fancies too ? Did fate
 Decree they found a beauty separate 150
 In the poor snatch itself?—"Take Elys, there,
 "—"Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
 "—"So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks
 "—"Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks
 "—"Sun-blanced the livelong summer"—if they
 heard 155
 "Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
 "And loved them as I love them who have run
 "These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun

“ Into the white cool skin—who first could clutch,
 “ Then praise—I needs must be a god to such. 160
 “ Or what if some, above themselves, and yet
 “ Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
 “ An impress on our gift? So, men believe
 “ And worship what they know not, nor receive
 “ Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, per-
 chance, 165
 “ Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
 “ Until, by song, each floating part be linked
 “ To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?”
 He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near 170
 And nearer, while the underwood was pushed
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;
 Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
 Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet: 175
 You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
 Flutter—“ a Roman bride, when they 'd dispart
 “ Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
 “ Holding that famous rape in memory still,
 “ Felt creep into her curls the iron chill, 180
 “ And looked thus,” Eglamor would say—indeed
 ‘T is Eglamor, no other, these precede
 Home hither in the woods. “ ‘T were surely sweet
 “ Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
 “ To sleep!” judged Naddo, who in person led 185
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
 A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old
 friends
 Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends. 190
 “ Let us but get them safely through my song

“ And home again ! ” quoth Naddo.

All along,
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
—This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his
hand,

Eglamor, lived Sordello’s opposite.

195

For him indeed was Naddo’s notion right,

And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,

A ceremony that withdrew the last

Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil

200

Which hid the holy place : should one so frail

Stand there without such effort ? or repine

If much was blank, uncertain at the shrine

He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,

The power responded, and some sound or sight

Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed,

205

In rhyme, the beautiful, forever !—mixed

With his own life, unloosed when he should please,

Having it safe at hand, ready to ease

All pain, remove all trouble ; every time

He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,

210

(Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)

Faltering ; so distinct and far above

Himself, these fancies ! He, no genius rare,

Transfiguring in fire or wave or air

At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up

215

In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,

His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few

And their arrangement finds enough to do

For his best art. Then, how he loved that art !

The calling marking him a man apart

220

From men—one not to care, take counsel for

Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Eglamor

Was neediest of his tribe)—since verse, the gift,

Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift

Without it, e’en content themselves with wealth

225

And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
So, Eglamor was not without his pride !

The sorriest bat which cowers throughout noontide
While other birds are jocund, has one time

When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime 230
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer ;

And Eglamor was noblest poet here—

He well knew, 'mid those April woods he cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,

That Naddo might suppose him not to think 235
Entirely on the coming triumph : wink

At the one weakness ! 'T was a fervid child,
That song of his ; no brother of the guild

Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
The exaltation and the overthrow :

Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank

Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout

Like others, not from any zeal to show 245
Pleasure that way : the common sort did so,

What else was Eglamor ? who, bending down
As they, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,

Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
Left one great tear on it, then joined his band

—In time ; for some were watching at the door :
Who knows what envy may effect ? “ Give o'er,
“ Nor charm his lips, nor craze him ! ” (here one
spied

And disengaged the withered crown)—“ Beside
“ His crown ? How prompt and clear those
verses rang

“ To answer yours ! nay, sing them ! ” And he
sang

Them calmly. Home he went ; friends used to
wait

His coming, zealous to congratulate ;
 But, to a man—so quickly runs report—
 Could do no less than leave him, and escort 260
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought :
 What must his future life be ? was he brought
 So low, who stood so lofty this Spring morn ?
 At length he said, “ Best sleep now with my scorn,
 “ And by to-morrow I devise some plain 265
 “ Expedient ! ” So, he slept, nor woke again.
 They found as much, those friends, when they
 returned
 O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
 About Sordello's paradise, his roves
 Among the hills and vales and plains and groves, 270
 Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,
 They lay the beaten man in his abode, 275
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
 By means of it, however, one step more
 In joy ; and, mastering the round at length,
 Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength, 280
 When from his covert forth he stood, addressed
 Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
 Primæval pines o'ercanopy his couch,
 And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch
 Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look, 285
 And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
 The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said
 It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head ?)
 —Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.
 A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell 290
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
 Till evening ; evening gives it to her gales

To clear away with such forgotten things
 As are an eyesore to the morn : this brings
 Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

295

So much for Eglamor. My own month came ;
 'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.

Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
 Sordello ; each new sprinkle of white stars
 That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars
 Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed
 The ripest, made him happier ; filleted
 And robed the same, only a lute beside
 Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
 The country stretched : Goito slept behind
 —The castle and its covert, which confined
 Him with his hopes and fears ; so fain of old
 To leave the story of his birth untold.

300

At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow
 Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
 And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,
 Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
 All was quite false and sure to fade one day :
 The closelier drew he round him his array
 Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
 A reason for his difference from men
 Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
 While aught of that old life, superbly dressed
 Down to its meanest incident, remained
 A mystery : alas, they soon explained
 Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts
 To this : when at Vicenza both her counts
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
 Reviled him as he followed ; he for spite
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night
 Among the flames young Ecelin was born
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn

305

310

315

320

325

From the roused populace hard on the rear,
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear 330
 Grew high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except
 His child to thank. And when the full escape
 Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned 335
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
 Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince 340
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
 (For, once this notable discovery made,
 The past at every point was understood)
 —Might harbour easily when times were rude,
 When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve 345
 That pledge of Agnes Este—loth to leave
 Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
 While there Taurello bode ambiguously—
 He who could have no motive now to moil
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil—
 As it were worth while yet (went the report) 350
 To disengage himself from her. In short,
 Apollo vanished ; a mean youth, just named
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
 —How shall I phrase it ?—Monarch of the World ! 355
 For, on the day when that array was furled
 Forever, and in place of one a slave
 To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
 In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring not
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot, 360
 Until a magical equipment, strength,
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at
 length,
 Content with unproved wits and failing frame,

- In virtue of his simple will, to claim
 That mastery, no less—to do his best
 With means so limited, and let the rest 365
 Go by,—the seal was set: never again
 Sordello could in his own sight remain
 One of the many, one with hopes and cares
 And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store 370
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no more,
 Never again for him and for the crowd
 A common law was challenged and allowed
 If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
 By a mad impulse nothing justified 375
 Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course
 By any known example? Men no more
 Compete with him than tree and flower before. 380
 Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
 Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
 Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
 The same result with meaner mortals trained
 To strength or beauty, moulded to express 385
 Each the idea that rules him; since no less
 He comprehends that function, but can still
 Embrace the others, take of might his fill
 With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix 390
 On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
 By any partial organ, never stamped
 Strong, and to strength turning all energies—
 Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—
 That is, he loves not, nor possesses One 395
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
 To its exclusive purpose. “Fortunate!
 “This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
 “A soul so various—took no casual mould

" Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold, 400
 " Clogged her forever—soul averse to change
 " As flesh : whereas flesh leaves soul free to range,
 " Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
 " Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
 " So, range, free soul !—who, by self-consciousness, 405
 " The last drop of all beauty dost express—
 " The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
 " For thee : while for the world, that can dispense
 " Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder—make
 " A shift to love at second-hand, and take 410
 " For idols those who do but idolize,
 " Themselves,—the world that counts men strong
 or wise,
 " Who, themselves, court strength, wisdom,—it
 shall bow
 " Surely in unexampled worship now,
 " Discerning me!"—

(Dear monarch, I beseech, 415

Notice how lamentably wide a breach
 Is here : discovering this, discover too
 What our poor world has possibly to do
 With it ! As pigmy natures as you please—
 So much the better for you ; take your ease, 420
 Look on, and laugh ; style yourself God alone ;
 Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone !
 All that is right enough : but why want us
 To know that you yourself know thus and thus ?)
 " The world shall bow to me conceiving all 425
 " Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,
 " Afar—not tasting any ; no machine
 " To exercise my utmost will is mine :
 " Be mine mere consciousness ! Let men perceive
 " What I could do, a mastery believe, 430
 " Asserted and established to the throng
 " By their selected evidence of song

"Which now shall prove, whate'er they are, or seek

"To be, I am—whose words, not actions speak,

"Who change no standards of perfection, vex

435

"With no strange forms created to perplex,

"But just perform their bidding and no more,

"At their own satiating-point give o'er,

"While each shall love in me the love that leads

"His soul to power's perfection." Song, not deeds, 440

(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook

Mankind no other organ ; he would look

For not another channel to dispense

His own volition by, receive men's sense

Of its supremacy—would live content,

445

Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.

Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek

And, striving, be admired : nor grace bespeak

Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes :

Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods; 450

But he would give and take on song's one point.

Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised a-joint,

Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,

Must sue in just one accent ; tempests shed

Thunder, and raves the windstorm : only let

455

That key by any little noise be set—

The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch

On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch

Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,

However loud, however low—all lift

460

The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.

Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,

And this, for his, will hardly interfere !

Its businesses in blood and blaze this year

But wile the hour away—a pastime slight

465

Till he shall step upon the platform : right !

And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,

Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought enough,—

Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :
 Were it a less digested plan ! how swerve
 To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried
 grapes,
 And watch the soaring hawk there ! Life escapes
 Merrily thus.

470

He thoroughly read o'er
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply
 A famished world.

475

The evening star was high
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
 Before him : friends applauded, foes connived,
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest
 Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned
 Goito-manufacture. Then he found
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,

480

A sore annoyance ; 't was the song's effect
 He cared for, scarce the song itself : reflect !
 In the past life, what might be singing's use ?
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
 Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
 That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured,
 No overleaping means for ends—take both
 For granted or take neither ! I am loth
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's ;
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors

485

Go pine ; "the master certes meant to waste
 "No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
 "He'd please anon : true bard, in short,—disturb
 "His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,
 "Fancy nor reason, wanting in him ; whence
 "The staple of his verses, common sense :
 "He built on man's broad nature—gift of gifts,

490

495

500

"That power to build ! The world contented shifts
 "With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
 "Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
 "Its poet-soul—that 's, after all, a freak 505
 " (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
 "With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
 "So plainly incompatible that—yes—
 "Yes—should a son of his improve the breed
 "And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed !" 510
 "Well, there 's Goito and its woods anon,
 "If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on
 "Now !" thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent 515
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
 Much as you study arras how to twirl
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl
 Once ; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no !
 Never quite reach what struck the people so, 520
 As from the welter of their time he drew
 Its elements successively to view,
 Followed all actions backward on their course,
 And catching up, unmixed at the source,
 Such a strength, such a weakness, added then 525
 A touch or two, and turned them into men.
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape ;
 Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
 Sinner the other flared portentous by 530
 A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
 At his success ? The scheme was realized
 Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,
 The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve, 535

Who said, " But Anafest—why asks he less
 " Than Lucio, in your verses ? how confess,
 " It seemed too much but yestereve!" —the youth,
 Who bade him earnestly, " Avow the truth ! 540
 " You love Bianca, surely, from your song ;
 " I knew I was unworthy !" —soft or strong,
 In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
 Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
 Digested. Courted thus at unawares, 545
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
 He caught himself shamefully hankering
 After the obvious petty joys that spring
 From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
 And condescend with pleasures—one and all 550
 To be renounced, no doubt ; for, thus to chain
 Himself to single joys and so refrain
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,
 His prime design ; each joy must he abjure
 Even for love of it.

He laughed : what sage 555

But perishes if from his magic page
 He look because, at the first line, a proof
 'T was heard salutes him from the cavern roof ?
 "On ! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
 "To the day's task ; compel your slave provide 560
 "Its utmost at the soonest ; turn the leaf
 "Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in
 brief—
 " Cannot men bear, now, something better ?—fly
 "A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
 "Of essences ? the period sure has ceased
 "For such : present us with ourselves, at least,
 "Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
 "Made flesh : wait not ! "

Awhile the poet waits

However. The first trial was enough :

SORDELLA

BOOK II

He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought
That Language,—welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armour was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it,—boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
“Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!” Fond
essay!
Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception’s place
But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception into: it’s to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. “For the rest,
“E’en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
“The whole dream, what impertinence in me
“So to express it, who myself can be

“ The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are those 605
 “ I sing to, over-likely to suppose
 “ A higher than the highest I present
 “ Now, which they praise already : be content
 “ Both parties, rather—they with the old verse,
 “ And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse ! ” 610
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, which rings
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps ;
 So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits. 615
 He set to celebrating the exploits
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came

The world's revenge : their pleasure, now his aim
 Merely,—what was it ? “ Not to play the fool
 “ So much as learn our lesson in your school ! ” 620
 Replied the world. He found that, every time
 He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
 His auditory recognized no jot
 As he intended, and, mistaking not
 Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce 625
 Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
 His will . . . conceive it caring for his will !
 —Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
 Had Montfort at completely (so to speak) 630
 His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept :
 The true meed for true merit !—his abates
 Into a sort he most repudiates,
 And on them angrily he turns. Who were 635
 The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
 About their recognition, ay or no ?
 In spite of the convention months ago,
 (Why blink the truth ?) was not he forced to help

This same ungrateful audience, every whelp 640
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers
 With the bright band of old Goito years,
 As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
 Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
 Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed 645
 A fairy dust upon that multitude,
 Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
 His giants dignified those puny elves,
 Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
 Himself still footing a delusive round, 650
 Remote as ever from the self-display
 He meant to compass, hampered every way
 By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
 Continue, make believe to find in men
 A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by, 655

And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
 Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
 With each; one jarred against another life;
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man—
 Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran 660
 Here, there: let slip no opportunities
 As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
 To drop on him some no-time and acquit
 His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
 That waiving any compromise between 665
 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
 Beyond most methods)—of incurring scoff
 From the Man-portion—not to be put off
 With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
 Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered forth in 670
 dream,
 Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
 But just his sorry self?—who yet might be

Sorrier for aught he in reality
 Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part, 675
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse ; the Art
 Developing his soul a thousand ways—
 Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
 The multitude with majesties, convince
 Each sort of nature that the nature's prince 680
 Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
 Into a bravest of expedients, too ;
 Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
 Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went 685
 To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
 Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward !
 But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard, 690
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
 That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
 A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

Then, if internal struggles to be one,
 Which frittered him incessantly piecemeal, 695
 Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
 Intruding Mantuans ! ever with some call
 To action while he pondered, once for all,
 Which looked the easier effort—to pursue
 This course, still leapo'er paltry joys, yearn through 700
 The present ill-appreciated stage
 Of self-revealment, and compel the age
 Know him—or else, forsaking bard-craft, wake
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake
 Off timid habits of denial, mix 705
 With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
 For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,
 The obvious if not only shelter lay

SORDELLO

BOOK II

In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad
'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule ?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-coloured robe for filamot,
And crop his hair ; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigour ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk ! Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess. 710
Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed ; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period ; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which
He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;
(For, at conjecture how might words appear
To others, playing there what happened here,
And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 't was slipped, the occasion he returned
To seize :) he 'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach ;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close ; each excellency went
For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust 715
720
725
730
735
740
745

And more : why move his soul, since move it must
 At minute's notice or as good it failed
 To move at all ? The end was, he retailed
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use
 This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce 750
 Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
 If false or true 't was spoken ; praise and blame
 Of what he said grew pretty nigh the same
 —Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul, 755
 Unequal to the compassing a whole,
 Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
 About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive
 Who could to take eternal interest
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best ! 760
 Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
 He hailed, decried, the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
 That his poor piece of daily work to do 765
 Was—not sink under any rivals ; who
 Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,
 Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
 "As knops that stud some almug to the pith 770
 "Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
 "Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
 "Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the
 breese"—
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these !
 But—but—

“Observe a pompon-twine afloat ; 775
 “Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat !
 “Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,
 “The entire surface of the pool to boot.

- “ So could I pluck a cup, put in one song
 “ A single sight, did not my hand, too strong, 780
 “ Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.
 “ How should externals satisfy my soul ? ”
 “ Why that’s precise the error Squarcialupe ”
 (Hazarded Naddo) “ finds ; ‘ the man can’t stoop
 “ ‘ To sing us out,’ quoth he, ‘ a mere romance ; 785
 “ ‘ He’d fain do better than the best, enhance
 “ ‘ The subjects’ rarity, work problems out
 “ ‘ Therewith.’ Now, you’re a bard, a bard past
 doubt,
 “ And no philosopher ; why introduce
 “ Crotchetts like these ? fine, surely, but no use 790
 “ In poetry—which still must be, to strike,
 “ Based upon common sense ; there’s nothing like
 “ Appealing to our nature ! what beside
 “ Was your first poetry ? No tricks were tried
 “ In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes ! 795
 “ ‘ The man,’ said we, ‘ tells his own joys and woes :
 “ ‘ We’ll trust him.’ Would you have your songs
 endure ?
 “ Build on the human heart !—why, to be sure
 “ Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,
 “ Ours, every one’s, the healthy heart one cares 800
 “ To build on ! Central peace, mother of strength,
 “ That’s father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,
 “ Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
 “ When they have got their calm ! And is it true,
 “ Fire rankles at the heart of every globe ? 805
 “ Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe
 “ Too deeply for poetic purposes :
 “ Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
 “ Laugh ! what does that prove ?—stations you
 midway
 “ And saves some little o’er-refining. Nay,
 “ That’s rank injustice done me ! I restrict 810

"The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
 "Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did
 "I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
 "That sense of power, you have! True bards
 believe

815

"All able to achieve what they achieve—
 "That is, just nothing—in one point abide
 "Profounder simpletons than all beside.
 "Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard

"Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!" 820
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe

Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe
 What grubs or nips or rubs or rips—your louse
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,

Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
 By implements it sedulous employs

To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise
 Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude

At once! They settled staunchly; shame ensued! 830
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb

To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
 As Naddo styled it! 'T was not worth oppose
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think

835

Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to
 slink

Back expeditiously to his safe place,
 And chew the cud—what he and what his race
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this
 Conformity was partial. He would miss

840

Some point, brought into contact with them ere
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere
 Of his existence they attended him;
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectified—a grim

List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried, 845

- His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
 Nor merely neutralized his waking act
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract
 The intermediate will, the choice of means.
 He lost the art of dreaming : Mantuan scenes 850
 Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running-o'er
 Of gallantries ; "abjure the soul, content
 "With body, therefore !" Scarcely had he bent
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast 855
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
 And task it duly ; by advances slight,
 The simple stuff becoming composite,
 Count Lori grew Apollo : best recall
 His fancy ! Then would some rough peasant-
 Paul, 860
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
 His gay apparel o'er ; that countenance
 Gathered his shattered fancies into one,
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone
 Sufficed the grey Paulician : by and by, 865
 To balance the ethereality,
 Passions were needed ; foiled he sank again.
 Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)
 Because a sudden sickness set it free
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee, 870
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed ; at once
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
 Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,
 "Half-crazed I think ; what good 's the Kaiser's
 gold
 "To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch 875
 "My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—
 "He bears that double breastplate on,' they say,
 "So many minutes less than yesterday !'
 "Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees

- “Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall
please 880
- “Exact a punishment for many things
- “You know, and some you never knew ; which
brings
- “To memory, Azzo’s sister Beatrix
- “And Richard’s Giglia are my Alberic’s
- “And Ecelin’s betrothed ; the Count himself 885
- “Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf
- “Mean to embrace each other.” So began
Romano’s missive to his fighting man
- Taurello—on the Tuscan’s death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples’ bay 890
- Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
Out of Vesuvius’ throat, like this mishap
Startled him. “That accursed Vicenza ! I
- “Absent, and she selects this time to die !
- “Ho, fellows, for Vicenza !” Half a score 895
- Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs : too late—
“Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,”
- The chieftain stammered ; “let me die in peace—
- “Forget me ! Was it I who craved increase 900
- “Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst
- “Against the Father : as you found me first
- “So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma, sure,
“Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—
“Only be pacified !”
- The country rung 905
- With such a piece of news : on every tongue,
How Ecelin’s great servant, congeed off,
Had done a long day’s service, so, might doff
The green and yellow, and recover breath
At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude’s death, 910
- (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho’s house, he carried to reside

At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
 A structure worthy her imperial style,
 The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine, 915
 She never lived to see)—although his line
 Was ancient in her archives and she took
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
 Her child when he forsook himself and spent
 A prowess on Romano surely meant 920
 For his own growth—whither he ne'er resorts
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
 Were shows to greet him. “Take a friend's
 advice,”
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, “nor be rash 925
 “Because your rivals (nothing can abash
 “Some folks) demur that we pronounced you
 best
 “To sound the great man's welcome ; 't is a test,
 “Remember ! Strojavacca looks asquint,
 “The rough fat sloven ; and there 's plenty hint 930
 “Your pinions have received of late a shock—
 “Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock !
 “Sing well !” A signal wonder, song 's no whit
 Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit ;
 Another day, Sordello finds, will bring 935
 The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing ;
 So, a last shift, quits Mantua—slow, alone :
 Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
 Song must be struck. What occupies that front ?
 Just how he was more awkward than his wont 940
 The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
 For dignity no crosses could affect—
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect
 A satisfaction if established joys 945

Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come
 Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
 On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went, 950
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace.

The moon came out; like features of a face,
 A querulous fraternity of pines,
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling
 vines

Also came out, made gradually up 955
 The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup
 And castle. He had dropped through one defile
 He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
 Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, en-
 wrapped

Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped, 960
 Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
 To wear his soul away in discontent,
 Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
 Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
 As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and 965
 frail,

Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
 Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
 —Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
 The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
 Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,— 970
 When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
 And flung into the common court beside
 Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
 Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
 Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,— 975
 Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
 Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
 Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,

But more mysterious ; gone to ruin—trails
 Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought avails 980
 The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
 The maple chamber : did I say, its floor
 Was made of intersecting cedar beams ?
 Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold
 streams

Of air quite from the dungeon ; lay your ear 985
 Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear
 In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
 And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests
 Empty and smelling of the iris root
 The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
 Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day, 990
 Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
 Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
 Had been at the commencement proved unfit ;
 That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
 Mankind—no fitter : was the Will Itself
 In fault ?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
 Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;
 Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile, 1000
 "I shall be king again !" as he withdrew
 The envied scarf ; into the font he threw
 His crown.

Next day, no poet ! "Wherefore ?" asked
 Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
 As devils, ended ; "don't a song come next ?" 1005
 The master of the pageant looked perplexed
 Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.
 "His Highness knew what poets were : in brief,
 "Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
 "To peevishness, caprice ? or, call it spite,
 "One must receive their nature in its length 1010

“And breadth, expect the weakness with the
strength !”

—So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,

The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,

Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,

And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

1015

BOOK THE THIRD

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew ; 5
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue
That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,
Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—factitious humours grown
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own— 10
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the stain 15
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit, 20
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglantines,
The last voice murmurs, 'twixt the blossomed vines,
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought 25
To compass self-perception with, he sought
By forcing half himself—an insane pulse
Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,
Never transmute—on human sights and sounds,

To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds 30
 It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
 Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
 Than part revealed : Sordello well or ill
 Is finished : then what further use of Will,
 Point in the prime idea not realized, 35
 An oversight ? inordinately prized,
 No less, and pampered with enough of each
 Delight to prove the whole above its reach.
 " To need become all natures, yet retain
 " The law of my own nature—to remain 40
 " Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,
 " Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp
 and pink,
 " Or those palefragrant tears where zephyrs stanch
 " March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!
 " Will and the means to show will, great and small, 45
 " Material, spiritual,—abjure them all
 " Save any so distinct, they may be left
 " To amuse, not tempt become ! and, thus bereft,
 " Just as I first was fashioned would I be !
 " Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me 50
 " Thou visitest to comfort and befriend !
 " Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,
 " Since I possess thee !—nay, thus shut mine eyes
 " And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,
 " When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when 55
 " Out-standest : wherefore practise upon men
 " To make that plainer to myself ? "

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year
 Wasted ; or simply notice change in him—
 How eyes, once with exploring bright, grew dim 60
 And satiate with receiving. Some distress
 Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness
 Under the imbecility,—nought kept

That down ; he slept, but was aware he slept,
So, frustrated : as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain
His own blood's measured clicking at his brain.

65

To finish. One declining Autumn day—
Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—
He sauntered home complacently, their moods
According, his and nature's. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out ; so dark
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass
Singing at all ; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo's now. The year

75

Began to find its early promise sere
As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus stone
Outlingers flesh : nature's and his youth gone,
They left the world to you, and wished you joy.
When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the

80

marsh

Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,
And, where the mists broke up immense and white
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.
And here was nature, bound by the same bars
Of fate with him !

90

“ No ! youth once gone is gone :
“ Deeds, let escape, are never to be done.
“ Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year; for us—
“ Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
“ My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend,

95

- " Learning save that? Nature has time, may mend
 " Mistake, she knows occasion will recur ;
 " Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her 100
 " With her magnificent resources ?—I
 " Must perish once and perish utterly.
 " Not any strollings now at even-close
 " Down the field-path, Sordello ! by thorn-rows
 " Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire 105
 " And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
 " She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
 " Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she
 durst
 " Answer 't was April. Linden-flower-time-long
 " Her eyes were on the ground ; 't is July, strong 110
 " Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
 " The woodside, here or by the village elm
 " That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat
 pale,
 " But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil
 " And whisper (the damp little hand in yours) 115
 " Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that
 endures
 " Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout
 " Of haggard ribalds wandering about
 " The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
 " Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse, 120
 " Parading,—to the gay Palermitanis,
 " Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
 " Nuocera holds,—those tall grave dazzling Norse,
 " High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than
 the morse,
 " Queens of the caves of jet stalactites, 125
 " He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
 " The blind night seas without a saving star,
 " And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
 " Sordello !—here, mollitious alcoves gilt

- “Superb as Byzant domes that devils built !” 130
 “—Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance to go
 “Ever like august cheery Dandolo,
 “Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
 “Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
 “Through vanquished Byzant where friends note
 for him 135
 “What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,
 “T were fittest he transport to Venice’ Square—
 “Flattered and promised life to touch them there
 “Soon, by those fervid sons of senators !
 “No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces,
 wars ! 140
 “Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
 “Points in the life I waited ! what are ye
 “But roundels of a ladder which appeared
 “Awhile the very platform it was reared
 “To lift me on ?—that happiness I find 145
 “Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
 “Instinct which bade forego you all unless
 “Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
 “Awaited me ; the way life should be used
 “Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced 150
 “To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed
 “Life’s very use, so long ! Whatever seemed
 “Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed
 “My reaching it—no pleasure. I have laid
 “The ladder down ; I climb not ; still, aloft 155
 “The platform stretches ! Blisses strong and soft,
 “I dared not entertain, elude me ; yet
 “Never of what they promised could I get
 “A glimpse till now ! The common sort, the
 crowd,
 “Exist, perceive ; with Being are endowed, 160
 “However slight, distinct from what they See,
 “However bounded ; Happiness must be,

“ To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
 “ Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
 “ Become what they behold ; such peace-in-
 strife,

165

“ By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
 “ The Alien turning Native to the soul

“ Or body—which instructs me ; I am whole

“ There and demand a Palma ; had the world

“ Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,

“ ‘T were Happiness to make it one with me :

170

“ Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,

“ Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend

“ In spirit now ; and this done, what’s to blend

“ With ? Nought is Alien in the world—my Will

175

“ Owns all already ; yet can turn it—still

“ Less—Native, since my Means to correspond

“ With Will are so unworthy, ’t was my bond

“ To tread the very joys that tantalize

“ Most now, into a grave, never to rise.

180

“ I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?

“ Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try

“ Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue

“ I miss ?—that’s underneath my finger too,

“ Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning
 traced

185

“ Deeper, some petty consequence embraced

“ Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then?—complained

“ So much my Will was fettered, yet remained

“ Content within a tether half the range

“ I could assign it ?—able to exchange

190

“ My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and

“ Idle because I could thus understand—

“ Could e’en have penetrated to its core

“ Our mortal mystery, yet—fool—forbore,

“ Preferred elaborating in the dark

195

“ My casual stuff, by any wretched spark

“ Born of my predecessors, though one stroke
 “ Of mine had brought the flame forth ! Mantua’s
 yoke,

“ My minstrel’s-trade, was to behold mankind,—

“ My own concern was just to bring my mind

200

“ Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,

“ Each object suffered stifle in the mist

“ Which hazard, custom, blindness interpose

“ Betwixt things and myself.”

Whereat he rose.

The level wind carried above the firs

205

Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,

Onward.

“ Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,

“ Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops

“ Under a humid finger ; while there fleets,

“ Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats

210

“ Never again ! To be deposed, immured

“ Clandestinely—still petted, still assured

“ To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight

“ Fleeting meanwhile ! ’T is noontide : wreak
 ere night

“ Somehow my will upon it, rather ! Slake

215

“ This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take

“ That serves ! A blasted bud displays you, torn,

“ Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn ;

“ But who divines what glory coats o’erclasp

“ Of the bulb dormant in the mummy’s grasp

220

“ Taurello sent ? ” . . .

“ Taurello ? Palma sent

“ Your Trouvere,” (Naddo interposing leant

Over the lost bard’s shoulder)—“ and, believe,

“ You cannot more reluctantly receive

“ Than I pronounce her message : we depart

225

“ Together. What avail a poet’s heart

“ Verona’s pomps and gauds ? five blades of grass

“ Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish
was,

“ On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke

“ I’ the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke. 230

“ Oh, the world’s tidings! small your thanks, I
guess,

“ For them. The father of our Patroness,

“ Has played Taurello an astounding trick,

“ Parts between Ecelin and Alberic

“ His wealth and goes into a convent: both 235

“ Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth

“ A week since at Verona: and they want

“ You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant

“ Ere Richard storms Ferrara.” Then was told

The tale from the beginning—how, made bold 240

By Salinguerra’s absence, Guelfs had burned

And pillaged till he unawares returned

To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend

Were doing their endeavour, how the end

O’ the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released 245

From further care, would with his marriage-feast

Inaugurate a new and better rule,

Absorbing thus Romano.

“ Shall I school

“ My master,” added Naddo, “ and suggest

“ How you may clothe in a poetic vest 250

“ These doings, at Verona? Your response

“ To Palma! Wherefore jest? ‘Depart at once?’

“ A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped

“ So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped

“ Out wisdom in the wilds here?—thoughts may be 255

“ Over-poetical for poetry.

“ Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma’s neck;

“ And yet what spoils an orient like some speck

“ Of genuine white, turning its own white grey?

“ You take me? Curse the cicala!”

One more day, 260

One eve—appears Verona ! Many a group,
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christendom
 Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment, 265
 Since Friedrich only waited some event
 Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage 270
 His barons from the burghers, and restore
 The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
 By Hildebrand.

I' the palace, each by each,
 Sordello sat and Palma : little speech
 At first in that dim closet, face with face 275
 (Despite the tumult in the market-place)
 Exchanging quick low laughters : now would rush
 Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
 But for the most part their two histories 280
 Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.
 And so the night flew on with its alarms
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;
 " Now, Lady ! " gasped he. Then arose the two
 And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still. 285
 A balcony lay black beneath until
 Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men
 Came on it and harangued the people : then
 Sea-like that people surging to and fro
 Shouted, " Hale forth the carroch—trumpets, ho, 290
 " A flourish ! Run it in the ancient grooves !
 " Back from the bell ! Hammer—that whom
 behoves
 " Mayhear the League is up ! Peal—learn who list,

'Verona means not first of towns break tryst
 'To-morrow with the League !'

Enough. Now turn— 295

Over the eastern cypresses : discern !

[Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
 Of the incessant carroch, even : " Haste—
 "The candle 's at the gateway ! ere it waste,
 "Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march
 "With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch !"
 Ferrara's succoured, Palma !

300

Once again

They sat together ; some strange thing in train

To say, so difficult was Palma's place

305

In taking, with a coy fastidious grace

Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.

But when she felt she held her friend indeed

Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant

Her lessons ; telling of another want

310

Goito's quiet nourished than his own ;

Palma—to serve him—to be served, alone

Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralized

The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised

If, while Sordello fain had captive led

315

Nature, in dream was Palma subjected

To some out-soul, which dawnd not though she

pined

Delaying, till its advent, heart and mind

Their life. " How dared I let expand the force

" Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource

320

" It grew for, should direct it ? Every law

" Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,

" Must One determine whose corporeal shape

" Would be no other than the prime escape

" And revelation to me of a Will

325

“Orb-like o’ershrouded and inscrutable
 “Above, save at the point which, I should know,
 “Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
 “So far, so much ; as now it signified
 “Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my
 guide,

330

“Whose mortal lip selected to declare
 “Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
 “—The first of intimations, whom to love ;
 “The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above
 “The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
 “Slow in appearing ?—if beneath it rose
 “Cravings, aversions,—did our green precinct
 “Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
 “With this or that endowment,—how, repressed
 “At once, such jetting power shrank to the rest !

335

“Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave
 “My spirit thence unfitted to receive
 “The consummating spell ?—that spell so near
 “Moreover ! ‘ Waits he not the waking year ?
 “His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
 “By this ; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
 “The thawed ravines ; because of him, the wind
 “Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
 “Him now ! ’

345

“And chief, that earnest April morn
 “Of Richard’s Love-court, was it time, so worn
 “And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,
 “Sitting that morn beside the Lady’s feet
 “And saying as she prompted ; till outburst
 “One face from all the faces. Not then first
 “I knew it ; where in maple chamber glooms,
 “Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate
 blooms,
 “Advanced it ever ? Men’s acknowledgment
 “Sanctioned my own: ’twas taken, Palma’s bent,—

355

“Sordello,—recognized, accepted.

“Dumb

“Sat she still scheming. Ecelin would come

360

“Gaunt, scared, ‘Cesano baffles me,’ he ’d say :

“‘Better I fought it out, my father’s way !

“‘Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,

“‘And you and your Taurello yonder !—what’s

“‘Romano’s business there ?’ An hour’s concern

365

“To cure the foward Chief !—induce return

“As heartened from those overmeaning eyes,

“Wound up to persevere,—his enterprise

“Marked out anew, its exigent of wit

“Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit

370

“And scheme against the next emergence, I—

“To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly

“Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope

“For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope.

“Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness

375

“In blank smooth snow. What semblance of
success

“To any of my plans for making you

“Mine and Romano’s? Break the first wall
through,

“Tread o’er the ruins of the Chief, supplant

“His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt :

380

“There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,

“And the insuperable Tuscan, here,

“Stay me ! But one wild eve that Lady died

“In her lone chamber : only I beside :

“Taurello far at Naples, and my sire

385

“At Padua, Ecelin away in ire

“With Alberic. She held me thus—a clutch

“To make our spirits as our bodies touch—

“And so began flinging the past up, heaps

“Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps

390

“Within her soul ; deeds rose along with dreams,

“Fragments of many miserable schemes,
 “Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—
 “‘Mongst others, like a casual trick o’ the past,
 “How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her
 face,
 “All left of it, into one arch-grimace
 “To die with . . .

395

“Friend, ‘t is gone ! but not the fear
 “Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
 “Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow
 weak

“When i’ the midst abrupt she ceased to speak 400

“—Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark !—for in

“Rushed o’ the very instant Ecelin

“(How summoned, who divines ?)—looking as if

“He understood why Adelaide lay stiff

“Already in my arms ; for ‘Girl, how must

405

“I manage Este in the matter thrust

“Upon me, how unravel your bad coil ?—

“Since’ (he declared) ‘t is on your brow—a soil

“Like hers there !’ then in the same breath, ‘he
 lacked

“No counsel after all, had signed no pact 410

“With devils, nor was treason here or there,

“Goito or Vicenza, his affair :

“He buried it in Adelaide’s deep grave,

“Would begin life afresh, now,—would not slave

“For any Friedrich’s nor Taurello’s sake ! 415

“What booted him to meddle or to make

“In Lombardy ?’ And afterward I knew

“The meaning of his promise to undo

“All she had done—why marriages were made,

“New friendships entered on, old followers paid 420

“With curses for their pains,—new friends’ amaze

“At height, when, passing out by Gate Saint
 Blaise,

" He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
 " Over a friar's neck,—'had vowed,' he said,
 " Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife 425
 " And child were saved there, to bestow his life
 " On God, his gettings on the Church."

" Exiled

" Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
 " My days and nights; 't was found, the orb I
 sought

" To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut, 430
 " No other: but how serve it?—authorize
 " You and Romano mingle destinies?
 " And straight Romano's angel stood beside
 " Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
 " For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,
 " And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
 " To learn, not teach me,) who withdrew the pall
 " From the dead past and straight revived it all,
 " Making me see how first Romano waxed,
 " Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed 440
 " My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,
 " Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
 " Its course, and counting every step astray
 " A gain so much. Romano, every way
 " Stable, a Lombard House now—why start back 445
 " Into the very outset of its track?
 " This patching principle which late allied
 " Our House with other Houses—what beside
 " Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
 " Who followed Conrad hither in such plight 450
 " His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed?
 " For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
 " A task, in the beginning hazardous
 " To him as ever task can be to us;
 " But did the weather-beaten thief despair
 " When first our crystal cincture of warm air

- “ That binds the Trevisan,—as its spice-belt
 “ (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt,—
 “ Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face—
 “ Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace? 460
 “ Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
 “ Maturing what already was mature?
 “ No ; his heart prompted Ecelo, ‘ Confront
 “ Este, inspect yourself. What’s nature? Wont.
 “ Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt 465
 “ The rest as an advantage ! ’ Old strength
 propred
 “ The man who first grew Podestà among
 “ The Vicentines, no less than, while there sprung
 “ His palace up in Padua like a threat,
 “ Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet 470
 “ In Conrad’s crew. Thus far the object gained,
 “ Romano was established—has remained—
 “ For are you not Italian, truly peers
 “ With Este ? *Azzo* better soothes our ears
 “ Than *Alberic* ? or is this lion’s-crine 475
 “ From over-mounts ’ (this yellow hair of mine)
 “ So weak a graft on Agnes Este’s stock ? ’
 “ (Thus went he on with something of a mock)
 “ Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate
 “ Conceded you, refuse to imitate 480
 “ Your model farther ? Este long since left
 “ Being mere Este : as a blade its heft,
 “ Este required the Pope to further him :
 “ And you, the Kaiser—whom your father’s whim
 “ Foregoes or, better, never shall forego 485
 “ If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
 “ Commenced, but Ecelin desists from : just
 “ As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
 “ Her donative,—her Piedmont given the Pope,
 “ Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope 490
 “ Twixt France and Italy,—to the superb

“ ‘ Matilda’s perfecting,—so, lest aught curb
 “ ‘ Our Adelaide’s great counter-project for
 “ ‘ Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
 “ ‘ With passage here from Germany,—shall you 495
 “ ‘ Take it,—my slender plodding talent, too !’
 “ —Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

“ He

“ As Patron of the scattered family
 “ Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
 “ Azzo’s alliances and Richard’s suit 500
 “ Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
 “ ‘ Nothing remains,’ Taurello said, ‘ but wait
 “ ‘ Some rash procedure : Palma was the link,
 “ ‘ As Agnes’ child, between us, and they shrink
 “ ‘ From losing Palma : judge if we advance,
 “ ‘ Your father’s method, your inheritance !’ 505
 “ The day I was betrothed to Boniface
 “ At Padua by Taurello’s self, took place
 “ The outrage of the Ferrarese : again,
 “ The day I sought Verona with the train 510
 “ Agreed for,—by Taurello’s policy
 “ Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
 “ Were present to annul or to confirm,—
 “ Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,
 “ Quitted Verona for the siege.

“ And now

515

“ What glory may engird Sordello’s brow
 “ Through this ? A month since at Oliero slunk
 “ All that was Ecelin into a monk ;
 “ But how could Salinguerra so forget
 “ His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet 520
 “ One effort to recover him ? He sent
 “ Forthwith the tidings of this last event
 “ To Ecelin—declared that he, despite
 “ The recent folly, recognized his right
 “ To order Salinguerra : ‘ Should he wring

525

““ Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
 ““ This chance away? Or were his sons now
 Head
 ““ O’ the House?’ Through me Taurello’s mis-
 sive sped;
 “ My father’s answer will by me return.
 “ Behold! ‘For him,’ he writes, ‘no more con-
 cern
 ““ With strife than, for his children, with fresh
 plots
 ““ Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots
 ““ For aye : Taurello shall no more subserve,
 ““ Nor Ecelin impose.’ Lest this unnerve
 ““ Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip 530
 ““ Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—
 “ I, in his sons’ default (who, mating with
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith
 ““ Its mainsea for that firmland, sea makes head
 ““ Against) I stand, Romano,—in their stead 540
 ““ Assume the station they desert, and give
 ““ Still, as the Kaiser’s representative,
 ““ Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—
 ““ Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light
 ““ Of the League’s issue, we, in some gay weed 545
 ““ Like yours, disguised together, may precede
 ““ The arbitrators to Ferrara : reach
 ““ Him, let Taurello’s noble accents teach
 ““ The rest! Then say if I have misconceived
 ““ Your destiny, too readily believed 550
 ““ The Kaiser’s cause your own!”

And Palma’s fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be 555
 Gate-vein of this heart’s blood of Lombardy,

Soul of this body—to wield this aggregate
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
 Though he should live—a centre of disgust
 Even—apart, core of the outward crust 560
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round
 Of life was quite accomplished ; and he found
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its might, 565
 Is insufficient to its own delight,
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill
 By means of such to body forth its Will—
 And, after, insufficient to apprise
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognize 570
 The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the last
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,—
 Will, he bade abdicate, which would not void
 The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed
 Mankind, a varied and divine array 575
 Incapable of homage, the first way,
 Nor fit to render incidentally
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
 In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
 The ignominious exile of mankind— 580
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact
 As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
 Was to secure—if the true diadem
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank 585
 The wisdom of that golden Palma,—thank
 Verona's Lady in her citadel
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell :
 And truly when she left him, the sun reared
 A head like the first clamberer's who peered 590
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.

Nor slight too much my rhymes—that spring,
dispread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels ! Rather say, 595
My transcendental platan ! mounting gay
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches
sheen

Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon 600
One mild flame,—last a pause, a burst, and all
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,
Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement ; he decrepit, stark, 605
Dozes ; her uncontrolled delight may mark
Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune : forth fare thee, put aside—
Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide 610
Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness ! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune, being at Venice.

Note, 615

In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed
Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one, 620
And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him : while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Never be more than dreamed) escapes there still

Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath 625
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
 To that; a passion and a knowledge far
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,
 Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
 In the bard's life: which evidence you owed 630
 To some slight weariness, some looking-off
 Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
 In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine
 In every point except one silly line
 About the restiff daughters)—what may lurk 635
 In that? "My life commenced before this work,"
 (So I interpret the significance
 Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
 "My life continues after: on I fare
 "With no more stopping, possibly, no care 640
 "To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
 "Where, when, o' the deeper life, as thus just now.
 "But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas
 "For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come to pass
 "'We read that story? How will he compress 645
 "'The future gains, his life's true business,
 "'Into the better lay which—that one flout,
 "'Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out—
 "'Engrosses him already, though professed
 "'To meditate with us eternal rest, 650
 "'And partnership in all his life has found?" "
 'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
 "Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored
 "For once, the awning stretched, the poles
 assured!
 "Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash, 655
 "Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
 "The margin 's silent: out with every spoil
 "Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
 "This serpent of a river to his head

"I' the midst ! Admire each treasure, as we
spread

660

"The bank, to help us tell our history

"Arigh : give ear, endeavour to descry

"The groves of giant rushes, how they grew

"Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,

"What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent 665

"Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went

"Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest

"The springing of a land-wind from the West!"

—Wherefore ? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day !

To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away

670

Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you

Part company : no other may pursue

Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate

Intends, if triumph or decline await

The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

675

I muse this on a ruined palace-step

At Venice : why should I break off, nor sit

Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit

England gave birth to ? Who 's adorable

Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will

680

Alack !—be queen to me ? That Bassanese

Busied among her smoking fruit-boats ? These

Perhaps from our delicious Asolo

Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico

Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves

685

To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves

Soiled by their own loose gold-meal ? Ah, beneath

The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek ! Her
wreath

Endures a month—a half-month—if I make

A queen of her, continue for her sake

690

Sordello's story ? Nay, that Paduan girl

Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl

In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed

Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
 Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post 695
 For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost
 That pluck at me and point, are you advised
 I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
 —Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like
 Their native field-buds and the green wheat-spike, 700
 So fair!—who left this end of June's turmoil,
 Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
 Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
 In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
 Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess 705
 There is such niggard stock of happiness
 To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
 One labours ineffectually to stretch
 It o'er you so that mother and children, both
 May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth! 710
 Divide the robe yet farther: be content
 With seeing just a score pre-eminent
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,
 Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
 For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim 715
 A like garb for the rest,—grace all, the same
 As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
 And health for each of you, not more—at length
 Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
 Might add the spirit's to the body's grace, 720
 And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.
 But in this magic weather one discards
 Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
 Of Life—'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and 725
 nought:
 'T is Venice, and 't is Life—as good you sought
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone

Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
 As hinder Life the evil with the good
 Which make up Living, rightly understood. 730

Only, do finish something ! Peasants, queens,
 Take them, made happy by whatever means,
 Parade them for the common credit, vouch
 That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
 In corners out of sight, was just as framed 735

For happiness, its portion might have claimed
 As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
 Fastuous as any !—such my project, baulked
 Already ; I hardly venture to adjust
 The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust 740

Me !—nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
 Inveterately tear-shot : there, be wise,
 Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant 745

You insult !—shall your friend (not slave) be shent
 For speaking home ? Beside, care-bit erased
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
 Supremely ; and I love you more, far more
 Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor. 750

Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
 A whisper came, “ Let others seek !—thy care
 “ Is found, thy life's provision ; if thy race
 “ Should be thy mistress, and into one face
 “ The many faces crowd ? ” Ah, had I, judge, 755

Or no, your secret ? Rough apparel—grudge
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
 Alone (that 's saddest, but it must be so) 760

Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
 Aught desultory or undignified,—
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass

Or not each formidable group, the mass
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini) 765
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
 Come timid up to me for alms? And then
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do
 Some unexampled grace!—when, whom but you 770
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
 Further before you say, it is to sneer
 I call you ravishing; for I regret
 Little that she, whose early foot was set
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
 Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall 775
 Toward me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
 Such sad chances should produce in thee such change, 780
 My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke
 Of right-hand, foot and eye—selects our yoke,
 Sordello, as your poetship may find!
 So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate 785
 Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate
 Of evil men past hope, "Don't each contrive,
 "Despite the evil you abuse, to live?—
 "Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
 "His own conceit of truth? to which he hies 790
 "By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
 "But to himself not inaccessible;
 "He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
 "Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed
 "His vilest wrong, empowered the losel clutch 795
 "One pleasure from a multitude of such
 "Denied him." Then assert, "All men appear
 "To think all better than themselves, by here
 "Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really," say,

SORDELLA

BOOK III

- "All men think all men stupider than they,
"Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
"The complicated scheme to make amends
"—Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,
"Good labours to exist." A slight advance,—
Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And nought beside ! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How nought were like dispensing without stint
The water of life—so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence
Commotion's born—could tell you of it all !

“—Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
“O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe !” 815
What, dullard ? we and you in smothery chafe,
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
Our throats,—each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
—Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about ! Potsherd him, Gibeonites ! 820
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,
Mark ye the dim first oozings ? Meribah !
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . .

“Presumptuous !” interrupts one. You, not I
'T is brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office : “office,” quotha ? can we get

To the beginning of the office yet?
 What do we here? simply experiment
 Each on the other's power and its intent
 When elsewhere tasked,—if this of mine were
 trucked

For yours to either's good,—we watch construct, 840
 In short, an engine: with a finished one,

What it can do, is all,—nought, how 't is done.

But this of ours yet in probation, dusk

A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk

Grows into shape by quarters and by halves; 845
 Remark thistooth's spring, wonderwhatthatvalve's

Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,

Make out each other more or less precise—

The scope of the whole engine 's to be proved;

We die: which means to say, the whole 's removed, 850
 Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—

To be set up anew elsewhere, begin

A task indeed, but with a clearer clime

Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.

And then, I grant you, it behoves forget

855

How 't is done—all that must amuse us yet

So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,

Pray that I be not busy slitting steel

Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore

Under a cluster of fresh stars, before

860

I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!

So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,

At present, and a weary while to come,

The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,

And seeing somewhat of man's state,—has been, 865
 For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;

For the better, what it was they saw; the best

Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:

"So that I glance," says such an one, "around,

"And there 's no face but I can read profound

870

- "Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that—fear,
 "And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !
 " " Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
 " " O'erarch, will blind thee ! Said I not ? She shuts
 " " Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet ! 875
 " " Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
 " " Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
 " " Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
 " " Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! Therefore stoop !'
 " " That's truth !'
- "(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth 880
 " " Would say that !'
 " Youth ? Plara the bard ? Set down
 " That Plara spent his youth in a grim town
 " Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
 " The minster for protection, never out
 " Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar. 885
 " The brighter shone the suburb,—all the more
 " Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
 " Of any chance escape of joy,—some roof,
 " Taller than they, allowed the rest detect,—
 " Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect 890
 " Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that
 ploughed cheek's
 " Repulsive gleam !) when the sun stopped both
 peaks
 " Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
 " Then sank, a huge flame on its socket edge,
 " With leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane 895
 " Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain—
 " The minster minded that ! in heaps the dust
 " Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,
 " Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail
 " In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale." 900
 "Exact the town, the minster and the street!"'
 "As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat :

“ Lust triumphs and is gay, Love’s triumphed o’er
 “ And sad : but Lucio’s sad. I said before,
 “ Love’s sad, not Lucio ; one who loves may be 905
 “ As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
 “ Downcast that lusts’ desire escapes the springe :
 “ ’T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
 “ Determines it, else colourless,—or mirth,
 “ Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth.” 910
 “ ‘Ay, that’s the variation’s gist !’

“ Indeed ?

“ Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed !
 “ And having seen too what I saw, be bold
 “ And next encounter what I do behold
 “ (That’s sure) but bid you take on trust !”

Attack 915

The use and purpose of such sights ! Alack,
 Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
 On Salinguerras praise in preference
 To the Sordellos : men of action, these !
 Who, seeing just as little as you please, 920
 Yet turn that little to account,—engage
 With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,
 The work o’ the world, not merely make report
 The work existed ere their day ! In short,
 When at some future no-time a brave band 925
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
 In heaven, my brother ! Meanwhile where’s the
 hurt

Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast
 As though heaven’s bounteous windows were
 slammed fast 930

Incontinent ? Whereas all you, beneath,
 Should scowl at, bruise their lips and break their
 teeth

Who ply the pulleys, for neglecting you :

SORDELLO

BOOK III

- And therefore have I moulded, made anew
 A Man, and give him to be turned and tried, 935
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own ?
 Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
 And then—ah then ! If Hercules first parched
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched 940
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
 What chance have I ? The demigod was mute
 Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined
 His forehead long enough, and he began 945
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
 Take not affront, my gentle audience ! whom
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
 Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend—
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend, 950
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
 Like your own trumpeter at Marathon,—
 You who, Platæa and Salamis being scant,
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant—
 And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed 955
 Over the midland sea last month, presumed
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
 At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets pressed
 Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear
 A crest proud as desert while I declare 960
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
 Tears of its colour from that painted king
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went
 To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet 965
 Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret !
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
 Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind

To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge,
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
At home, and may the summer showers gush
Without a warning from the missel thrush !

970

So, to our business, now—the fate of such
As find our common nature—overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it—
Cling when they would discard it ; craving
strength

975

To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap,—flounder on without a term,
Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .

980

But that 's the story—dull enough, confess !
There might be fitter subjects to allure ;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint :
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.
Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.

985

John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
He knew : a touching spectacle, that house
In motion to receive him ! Xanthus' spouse
You missed, made panther's meat a month since ;
but

990

Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey disciple
pressed,

995

1000

Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
 To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped
 Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge 1005
 The door turns and he enters: what quick twinge
 Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
 Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's
 Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned he,
 woke

Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-
 broke, 1010

"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I toiled

"To no more purpose? Is the gospel foiled

"Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus'
 hearth,

"Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—

"Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled

1015

"To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?"

Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself

"Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf

"Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;

"And that's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross, 1020

"You're painted with!"

His puckered brows unfold—

And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for—one discovering that to twist 5
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best
He 'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike—each party too intent
For noticing, howe'er the battle went, 10
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.
“ May Boniface be duly damned for this ! ”
—Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth : 15
“ A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe
“ In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
“ Be there to laugh at him ! ”—moaned some
young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last 20
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathy mallows no man
plants.
The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train 25
Admitted on a morning ; every town

Of the East League was come by envoy down
 To treat for Richard's ransom : here you saw
 The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
 The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross 30
 On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
 Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
 After the flock of steeples he might spy
 In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago 35
 To mend the ramparts : sure the laggards know
 The Pope's as good as here ! They paced the
 streets

More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
 "The League," announced a pursuivant,—"will
 match

" Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch 40
 "At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
 "On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
 "With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits
 "Their going to receive the delegates."

"Tito !" Our delegates exchanged a glance, 45
 And, keeping the main way, admired askance
 The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
 Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—
 Arbalist, manganel and catapult ;
 While stationed by, as waiting a result, 50
 Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased

Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,
 "Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay
 "The League's decision ! Get our friend away
 "And profit for the future: how else teach
 "Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach
 "Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?
 "Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.
 "Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare ?"

The carrochs halted in the public square. 60
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,

- Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
 Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
 "Ecelin" boldly out: so,—“Ecelin 65
 “Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
 “And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,
 “He styles his son, dwindleth away, no help
 “From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth
 “Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth— 70
 “Eh? Jubilate!”—“Peace! no little word
 “You utter here that 's not distinctly heard
 “Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
 “When we besieged Bassano—who, i' the thick
 “O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made, 75
 “Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
 “She managed it so well that, night by night
 “At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,
 “First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
 “And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swoond, 80
 “They knew the place was taken.”—“Ominous
 “That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
 “Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
 “Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench
 “O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.” 85
 “—Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
 “Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
 “His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.”
 What now?—“The founts! God's bread, touch
 not a plank!
 “A crawling hell of carrion—every tank 90
 “Choke-full!—found out just now to Cino's cost—
 “The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
 “And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
 “Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
 “Back now with Concorezzi: 'faith! they drag 95
 “Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag

"On his own palace, so adroitly razed
 "He knew it not ; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
 "And laughed apart ; Cino disliked their air—
 "Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care— 100
 "Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin
 "To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin*—
 "A silence ; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
 "Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each
 time,
 "At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick 105
 "Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
 "Grey hair about his spur !"

Which means, they lift

The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
 To stretch upon the truth ; as well avoid
 Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed. 110
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort 115
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short ;
 Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
 The fig-tree reared itself,—but stark and cramped,
 Made fools of, like tamed lions : whence, on the
 edge,
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge 120
 Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
 Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
 Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees 125
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
 Set by itself : and in the centre spreads,
 Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirit

Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
 With trees leave off on either hand ; pursue 130
 Your path along a wondrous avenue
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
 From many a Moorish summer : how they wind 135
 Out of the fissures ! likelier to bind
 The building than those rusted cramps which drop
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
 You fleeting shapes above there ! Ah, the pride
 Or else despair of the whole country-side ! 140
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
 God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps
 In crumbling Naples marble—meant to look
 Like those Messina marbles Constance took
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed 145
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,—
 A certain font with caryatides
 Since cloistered at Goito ; only, these
 Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
 Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop 150
 Their arms o' the instant after you ! Unplucked
 By this or that, you pass ; for they conduct
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle 155
 No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath, 160
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
 Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
 At the announcement of his over-match
 To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
 The pertinacious Gaul : while, limbs one heap, 165

The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched
 leap

Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
Clove dizzily the solid of the war
—Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
 170
San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home : whereat enlarged so much
 175
Neighbours upon the novel princely touch
He took,—who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace ;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
 180
Of the door-pillar.

He had really left
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este's camp was made ;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—
All had been seen by him, but scarce as when, —
 185
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,—
He made account of such. A crowd,—he meant
To task the whole of it ; each part's intent
 190
Concerned him therefore : and, the more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment. Sought
He respite from his task ? Descried he aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
 195
Of all these livers upon all delight ?
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
Whereby he still had imaged the mankind

His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
 His age—in plans to prove at least such thing 200
 Had been so dreamed,—which now he must
 impress

With his own will, effect a happiness
 By theirs,—supply a body to his soul
 Thence, and become eventually whole
 With them as he had hoped to be without— 205

Made these the mankind he once raved about ?
 Because a few of them were notable,
 Should all be figured worthy note ? As well
 Expect to find Taurello's triple line
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine. 210

Real pines rose here and there ; but, close among,
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng
 Of shrubs, he saw,—a nameless common sort
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report

And hurried into corners, or at best 215
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.

Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—how few !

And yet the people grew, the people grew,
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
 More left behind and most who should succeed,— 220
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—

Mingled with, and made veritably great
 Those chiefs : he overlooked not Mainard's state
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead 225

Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese

Or Paduans ; startling all the more, that these
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
 Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor) 230

Smiling ; for if a wealthy man decays
 And out of store of robes must wear, all days,
 One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,

'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more : 235
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
 Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
 For common wear as she goes through the world,
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While 240
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed
 In envying them,—or, if they aught enjoyed,
 Where lingered something indefinable 245
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
 Of the result, their good or bad estate)—
 Old memories returned with new effect :
 And the new body, ere he could suspect, 250
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,
 The new self seemed impatient to be used
 By him, but utterly another way
 Than that anticipated : strange to say,
 They were too much below him, more in thrall 255
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
 What booted scattered units?—here a mind
 And there, which might repay his own to find,
 And stamp, and use?—a few, howe'er august,
 If all the rest were grovelling in the dust ? 260
 No : first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
 Should he establish, privilege procure
 For all, the few had long possessed ! He felt
 An error, an exceeding error melt :
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants, 265
 Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,
 Such as he now distinguished every side,
 As his own want which might be satisfied,—
 And, after that, think of rare qualities

Of his own soul demanding exercise. 270
 It followed naturally, through no claim
 On their part, which made virtue of the aim
 At serving them, on his,—that, past retrieve,
 He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor could leave
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule, 275
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool !)
 Had never even entertained the thought
 That this his last arrangement might be fraught
 With incidental good to them as well,
 And that mankind's delight would help to swell 280
 His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
 Because the merry time of life must fleet,
 'T was deeper now,—for could the crowds repeat
 Their poor experiences? His hand that shook
 Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate, look! 285
 "With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a
 thread,
 "Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,
 "Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long
 while
 "That owner of the idiotic smile
 "Serves them!"

He fortunately saw in time 290
 His fault however, and since the office prime
 Includes the secondary—best accept
 Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
 Could teach him the preparatory one,
 And how to do what he had fancied done 295
 Long previously, ere take the greater task.
 How render first these people happy? Ask
 The people's friends: for there must be one good,
 One way to it—the Cause! He understood
 The meaning now of Palma; why the jar 300
 Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
 Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard hope

And Rome's despair?—'twixt Emperor and Pope
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—

Hardihood still recurring, still to fail— 305

That foreign interloping fiend, this free

And native overbrooding deity :

Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms

The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms

Of paradise ; or, on the other hand, 310

The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,

One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,

Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound

Some saving tree—which needs the Kaiser,
dressed

As the dislodging angel of that pest :

Yet flames that pest bedropped, flat head, full fold,

With coruscating dower of dyes. "Behold

"The secret, so to speak, and master-spring

"O' the contest!—which of the two Powers shall
bring

"Men good, perchance the most good : ay, it may 320

"Be that!—the question, which best knows the
way."

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past

Out of San Pietro ; never seemed the last

Of archers, slingers : and our friend began

To recollect strange modes of serving man— 325

Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,

And more. "This way of theirs may,—who can
tell?—

"Need perfecting," said he : "let all be solved

"At once ! Taurello 't is, the task devolved

"On late : confront Taurello !"

And at last 330

He did confront him. Scarce an hour had past

When forth Sordello came, older by years

Than at his entry. Unexampled fears

Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara—not the empty town

335

That morning witnessed : he went up and down
Streets whence the veil had been stript shred by
shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,

340

Townsfolk make shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
Was clasped with ; but an archer knew the coat—
Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his
knife.

345

Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguers' mass
Began at every carroch : he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings ; silently he bent
Over its fire, when voices violent

355

Began, “Affirm not whom the youth was like
“That struck me from the porch : I did not strike
“Again : I too have chestnut hair ; my kin
“Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
“Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away ! Sing !

Take

360

“My glove for guerdon!” And for that man's sake
He turned : “A song of Eglamor's !”—scarce
named,

When, “Our Sordello's rather !”—all exclaimed ;
“Is not Sordello famousst for rhyme ?”

He had been happy to deny, this time,—

365

Profess as heretofore the aching head
 And failing heart,—suspect that in his stead
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,
 So his intolerable risk might shift 370
 Or share itself ; but Naddo's precious gift
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain ! At the close—
 “I made that,” said he to a youth who rose
 As if to hear : 't was Palma through the band
 Conducted him in silence by her hand. 375

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
 Gave place to Palma and her friend, who went
 In turn at Montelungo's visit : one
 After the other were they come and gone,—
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope, 380
 This incarnation of the People's hope,
 Sordello,—all the say of each was said ;
 And Salinguerra sat,—himself instead
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
 'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set 385
 In order for the morning's use ; full face,
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
 The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely-
 blacked
 With ochre on the naked wall ; nor lacked
 Romano's green and yellow either side ; 390
 But the new token Tito brought had tried
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do
 Until the sight of her restored his lip
 A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship 395
 Had banished ! Afterward, the Legate found
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he
 wound
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
 Silent as when our couple left, whose brief

Encounter wrought so opportune effect 400
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject,
 Though time 't was now if ever, to pause—fix
 On any sort of ending : wiles and tricks
 Exhausted, judge ! his charge, the crazy town,
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down— 405
 His last sound troops ranged—care observed to
 post
 His best of the maimed soldiers innermost—
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
 Him not before. And now with this strange luck
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address 410
 So well, what thought he of?—how the success
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt ? 415
 No : that this minstrel was Romano's last
 Servant—himself the first ! Could he contrast
 The whole!—that minstrel's thirty years just spent
 In doing nought, their notablest event
 This morning's journey hither, as I told— 420
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
 A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise
 His eye before the magisterial gaze—
 And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes, 425
 Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,
 'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
 Expostulating trees—so agile, quick
 And graceful turned the head on the broad chest 430
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
 Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire
 Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown

Large massive locks discoloured as if a crown 435
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where
 A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound : 440
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
 Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,
 No lion more ; two vivid eyes, engraved
 In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek. 445
 Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed
 A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,
 Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent
 Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
 Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train 450
 As now a period was fulfilled again :
 Of such, a series made his life, compressed
 In each, one story serving for the rest—
 How his life-streams rolling arrived at last
 At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast, 455
 They would emerge, a river to the end,—
 Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,
 Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
 Then fell back to oblivion infinite :
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-
 grounds 460
 Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,
 Had gained him an occasion, That above,
 That eagle, testified he could improve
 Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way 465
 Of baldric ; while,—another thing that marred
 Alike emprise, achievement and reward,—
 Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.
 What past life did those flying thoughts pursue ?

As his, few names in Mantua half so old ;

470

But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled

It latterly, the Adelardi spared

No pains to rival them : both factions shared

Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield

A product very like the city's shield,

475

Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf

As after Salinguerra styled himself

And Este who, till Marchesalla died,

(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried

His fortune there : with Marchesalla's child

480

Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites be reconciled

And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—wealth

And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth

Already : when the Guelfs, the Ravennese

Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize

485

Linguetta, and are gone ! Men's first dismay

Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay

The after indignation, Boniface,

This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace

"Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate

490

"Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate

"That might have been, 'mongst Este's vassors—

"Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors

"Our step ; but we were zealous." Azzo then

To do with ! Straight a meeting of old men :

495

"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,

"What if we change our ruler and decoy

"The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere

"With Italy to build in, fix him here,

"Settle the city's troubles in a trice ?

500

"For private wrong, let public good suffice !"

In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends

Talked of the townsmen making him amends,

Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
 Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass 505
 A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
 Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
 In time for Azzo's entry with the bride ;
 Count Boniface rode smirking at their side ;
 "She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew, 510
 "And all Ancona ! If the stripling knew !"

Anon the stripling was in Sicily
 Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance ; he
 Was gracious nor his guest incapable ;
 Each understood the other. So it fell, 515
 One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,
 Had near forgotten by what precise degrees
 He crept at first to such a downy seat,
 The Count trudged over in a special heat
 To bid him of God's love dislodge from each 520
 Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach
 Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
 For who was just arrived at Mantua but
 The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,
 With tokens for Celano, Ecelin, 525
 Pistore, and the like ! Next news,—no whit
 Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
 His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band
 Of foreigners assemble, understand
 Garden-constructing, level and surround, 530
 Build up and bury in. A last news crowned
 The consternation : since his infant's birth,
 He only waits they end his wondrous girth
 Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
 To visit Mantua. When the Podestà 535
 Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
 Taurello thither, what could be their end
 But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
 The Kaiser helping ? He with most to dread

From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled
Both plotters : but the Guelfs in triumph yelled
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told :
—Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first :
But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be !
Though Azzo simply gained by the event
A shifting of his plagues—the first, content
To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and child,
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered—mortised in his trunk ;
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil
Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,
Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,
And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,
And paragon her namesake, win the meed
O' the great Matilda,—soon they overbore
The rest of Lombardy,—not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
“ Only, why is it Salinguerra screens

" Himself behind Romano ?—him we bade

" Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade ! "

—Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest

To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced

At once in the arrangement ; reasoned, plied

His friend with offers of another bride,

A statelier function—fruitlessly : 't was plain

Taurello through some weakness must remain

Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both

—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,

580

And this more plausible and facile wight

With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,

Admiring how his predecessors harped

On the wrong man : " thus," quoth he, " wits are
warped

585

" By outsides ! " Carelessly, meanwhile, his life

590

Suffered its many turns of peace and strife

In many lands—you hardly could surprise

The man ; who shamed Sordello (recognize !)

In this as much beside, that, unconcerned

What qualities were natural or earned,

595

With no ideal of graces, as they came

He took them, singularly well the same—

Speaking the Greek's own language, just because

Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws

In contracts with him ; while, since Arab lore

600

Holds the stars' secret—take one trouble more

And master it ! 'T is done, and now deter

Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,

From Friedrich's path !—Friedrich, whose pil-

grimage

The same man puts aside, whom he 'll engage

605

To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,

Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church

And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece

Which,—lend Taurello credit,—rivals Greece—

Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits. For elegance, he strung the angelot, Made rhymes thereto ; for prowess, clove he not Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper ? Why Detail you thus a varied mastery But to show how Taurello, on the watch For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch Their capabilities and purposes, Displayed himself so far as displayed these : While our Sordello only cared to know About men as a means whereby he 'd show Himself, and men had much or little worth According as they kept in or drew forth That self ; the other's choicest instruments Surmised him shallow.	610
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As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
 As proud of the completeness of his woe, 645
 Then weep real tears ;—now make some mad on-
 slaught

On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
 So painfully,—now cringe for peace, sue peace
 At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
 To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last 650
 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.

And men remarked these freaks of peace and war
 Happened while Salinguerra was afar :
 Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,
 To use his old adherent's wits again. 655

Not he !—“ who had advisers in his sons,
 “ Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
 “ Advice.” 'T was Adelaide's remaining staunch
 Prevented his destruction root and branch
 Forthwith ; but when she died, doom fell, for gay 660
 He made alliances, gave lands away
 To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew
 For ever from the world. Taurello, who
 Was summoned to the convent, then refused
 A word at the wicket, patience thus abused, 665
 Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
 Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
 Soon a few movements of the happier sort
 Changed matters, put himself in men's report
 As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside, 670
 And that became him ever. So, in pride
 And flushing of this kind of second youth,
 He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
 Lay prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,
 A laughing old outrageous stifled hate 675
 He bore to Este—how it would outbreak
 At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
 In sunny weather—as that noted day

When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
 Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how, 680
 On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
 A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed:
 As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
 Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
 All intermediate crumblings, to arrive 685
 At earth's catastrophe—'t was Este's crash
 Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
 Procedure! Este's true antagonist
 Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,
 All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He 690
 'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face
 I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought ere-
 while. 695

“Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?
 “That we should stick together, all the year
 “I kept Vicenza!—How old Boniface,
 “Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
 “He by that pillar, I at this,—caught each 700
 “In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
 “Egging the rabble on to disavow
 “Allegiance to their Marquis—Bacchus, how
 “They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
 “Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge 705
 “Paying arrears of tribute due long since—
 “Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor
 wince:
 “The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,
 “Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
 “And now he sits me, slavering and mute, 710
 “Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
 “Benumbed past aching with the altar slab:

- "Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab
 "Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
 "Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps" 715
 "—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?
 "Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
 "God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,
 "Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular
 "Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out!" 720
 "So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,
 "Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
 "In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate
 "Is with you, ambush, open field—or see
 "The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee!" 725
 "Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!
 "Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio
 —safe!
- "Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe
 "And reach us? If they block the gate? No tithe
 "Can pass—keep back, you Bassanese! The edge," 730
 "Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the
 wedge,
 "Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!
 "Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? The blood
 fries
 "And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
 "Those upturned faces choking with despair." 735
 "Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate! 'How
 now?
 "'You six had charge of her?' And then the vow
 "Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till
 one shriek
 "(I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—
 "Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled" 740
 "The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled
 "This morn, naked across the fire: how crown
 "The archer that exhausted lays you down

“ Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies ?

“ While one, while mine . . .

“ Bacchus ! I think there lies 745

“ More than one corpse there ” (and he paced the
room)

“ —Another cinder somewhere : 't was my doom

“ Beside, my doom ! If Adelaide is dead,

“ I live the same, this Azzo lives instead

“ Of that to me, and we pull, any how, 750

“ Este into a heap : the matter 's now

“ At the true juncture slipping us so oft.

“ Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed

“ His crown at such a juncture ! Still, if holds

“ Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfolds 755

“ The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin

“ That must recoil when the best days begin !

“ Recoil ? that 's nought ; if the recoiler leaves

“ His name for me to fight with, no one grieves :

“ But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock 760

“ His cloister to become my stumbling-block

“ Just as of old ! Ay, ay, there 't is again—

“ The land's inevitable Head—explain

“ The reverences that subject us ! Count

“ These Ecelins now ! Not to say as fount, 765

“ Originating power of thought,—from twelve

“ That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to
 delve,

“ Six shall surpass him, but . . . why men must
 twine

“ Somehow with something ! Ecelin 's a fine

“ Clear name ! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine
 with me

“ At once : our cloistered friend's capacity

“ Was of a sort ! I had to share myself

“ In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf

“ That 's forced illume in fifty points the vast

- “ Rare vapour he ’s environed by. At last 775
 “ My strengths, though sorely frittered, e’en
 converge
 “ And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet
 to urge
 “ The man be crowned ! “ That aloe, an he durst,
 “ Would climb ! Just such a bloated sprawler first
 “ I noted in Messina’s castle-court 780
 “ The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport
 “ If I would pledge my faith to win him back
 “ His right in Lombardy : ‘ for, once bid pack
 “ ‘ Marauders,’ he continued, ‘ in my stead
 “ ‘ You rule, Taurello ! ’ and upon this head 785
 “ Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her
 “ Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
 “ Retrude following ! “ I am absolved
 “ From further toil : the empery devolved
 “ On me, ’t was Tito’s word : I have to lay 790
 “ For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
 “ Prompt nobody, and render an account
 “ Taurello to Taurello ! Nay, I mount
 “ To Friedrich : he conceives the post I kept,
 “ —Who did true service, able or inept, 795
 “ Who ’s worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
 “ Me guerdoned, counsel follows : would he vie
 “ With the Pope really ? Azzo, Boniface
 “ Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen’s race
 “ Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point 800
 “ How easy ’t were to twist, once out of joint,
 “ The socket from the bone : my Azzo’s stare
 “ Meanwhile ! for I, this idle strap to wear,
 “ Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end
 “ To serve ? There ’s left me twenty years to spend 805
 “ —How better than my old way ? Had I one

“ Who laboured to o’erthrow my work—a son
 “ Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
 “ To root my pines up and then poison me,
 “ Suppose—’t were worth while frustrate that !
 Beside

810

“ Another life ’s ordained me : the world’s tide
 “ Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
 “ Of waves, a single wave through weariness
 “ Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore ?

“ My life must be lived out in foam and roar, 815
 “ No question. Fifty years the province held
 “ Taurello ; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
 “ He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone
 place,

“ These trees a year or two, then not a trace
 “ Of him ! How obtain hold, fetter men’s tongues 820

“ Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
 “ To which, despite our bustle, he is linked ?

“ —Flowersone may teaze, that never grow extinct.

“ Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

“ I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair, 825

“ To overawe the aloes ; and we trod

“ Those flowers, how call you such?—into the sod ;

“ A stately foreigner—a world of pain

“ To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain !

“ It would decline ; these would not be destroyed : 830

“ And now, where is it ? where can you avoid

“ The flowers ? I frighten children twenty years

“ Longer !—which way, too, Ecelin appears

“ To thwart me, for his son’s besotted youth

“ Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth : 835

“ They feel it at Vicenza ! Fate, fate, fate,

“ My fine Taurello ! Go you, promulgate

“ Friedrich’s decree, and here ’s shall aggrandise

“ Young Ecelin—your Prefect’s badge ! a prize

“ Too precious, certainly.

SORDELLO

BOOK IV

“ How now ? Compete 840

“ With my old comrade ? shuffle from their seat
 “ His children ? Paltry dealing ! Don’t I know
 “ Ecelin ? now, I think, and years ago !
 “ What ’s changed—the weakness ? did not I
 compound
 “ For that, and undertake to keep him sound 845
 “ Despite it ? Here ’s Taurello hankering
 “ After a boy’s preferment—this plaything
 “ To carry, Bacchus ! ” And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort 850
 Fail : while these last are ever stopping short—
 (So much they should—so little they can do !)
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
 If they desist ; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds 855
 Methodic with Taurello ; so, he turned,—
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
 Of Este’s horror-struck submitted neck,
 And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—
 To his own petty but immediate doubt 860
 If he could pacify the League without
 Conceding Richard ; just to this was brought
 That interval of vain discursive thought !
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot 865
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
 Enormous watercourse which guides him back
 To his own tribe again, where he is king ;
 And laughs because he guesses, numbering
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch 870
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,

- And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert-blast)
 That he has reached its boundary, at last 875
 May breathe ;—thinks o'er enchantments of the
 South
- Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,
 Eyes, nails, and hair ; but, these enchantments tried
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside
- For truth, projects a cool return with friends, 880
 The likelihood of winning mere amends
- Ere long ; thinks that, takes comfort silently,
 Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon. 885
- Midnight : the watcher nodded on his spear,
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear
 For any meagre and discoloured moon
 To venture forth ; and such was peering soon
 Above the harassed city—her close lanes 890
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep
 What little life was saved, more safely. Heap
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied 895
 Palma with none to listen. “ ‘T is your cause :
 “ What makes a Ghibellin ? There should be
 laws—
- “ (Remember how my youth escaped ! I trust
 “ To you for manhood, Palma ! tell me just
 “ As any child)—there must be laws at work 900
 “ Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
 “ Under the bad,—my multitude has part
 “ In your designs, their welfare is at heart
 “ With Salinguerra, to their interest
 “ Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest 905
 “ Our conference of much that scared me. Why
 “ Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I

"Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
 "This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind
 "O'erlooked till now : why boast my spirit's force, 910
 "—Such force denied its object ? why divorce
 "These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
 "As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed
 flame
 "Else quenched in the dead void, to living space ?
 "That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace, 915
 "Why vaunt so much my unencumbered dance,
 "Making a feat's facilities enhance
 "Its marvel ? But I front Taurello, one
 "Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
 "He does ; the people's good being paramount 920
 "With him, their progress may perhaps account
 "For his abiding still ; whereas you heard
 "The talk with Tito—the excuse preferred
 "For burning those five hostages,—and broached
 "By way of blind, as you and I approached, 925
 "I do believe."

She spoke : then he, "My thought

"Plainlier expressed ! All to your profit—nought
 "Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve
 "For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
 "While profiting your party. Azzo, too, 930
 "Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue
 "Their ends by means like yours, or better ?"

When

The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with
 men,

And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and
 blaze,

Morn broke: "Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze 935

"Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails

"In every point, while either party quails !

"These are the busy ones : be silent thou !

“ Two parties take the world up, and allow
“ No third, yet have one principle, subsist 940
“ By the same injustice ; whoso shall enlist
“ With either, ranks with man’s inveterate foes.
“ So there is one less quarrel to compose :
“ The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse—
“ I have done nothing, but both sides do worse 945
“ Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft
“ Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
“ The notion of a service—ha ? What lured
“ Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
“ Must move Taurello ? What if there remained 950
“ A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
“ For me, its true discoverer ? ”

Some one pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad : "They must know
"The tale of the dead worthy, long ago 955
"Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,
"Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
"In the world's corner—but too late no doubt,
"For the brave time he sought to bring about.
"—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" Then 960
He cast about for terms to tell him, when
Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood—"for I
"Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily 965
"Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent
"Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
"My wife or my brown sleeves")—some brother
spoke

Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise,
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name

Including, tending to produce the same
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
 Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest 975
 And a vile stranger,—two not worth a slave
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—fortune gave
 The rule there : so, Crescentius, haply dressed
 In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
 Taking the people at their word, forth stepped 980
 As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
 Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from his brain
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled
 Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled 985
 Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem
 Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
 —The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch !
 He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
 The flame, Rome 's just accomplished ! when
 returned 990
 Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress
 Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified
 "Their Consul in the Forum ; and abide 995
 "E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I—(for I
 "Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
 "Appointed)—I had option to keep wife
 "Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
 "Lose both. A song of Rome ! "

And Rome, indeed, 1000

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
 Looked an established point of light whence rays
 Traversed the world ; for, all the clustered homes
 Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes 1005
 In their degree ; the question was, how each

Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.
 Nor, of the Two, did either principle
 Struggle to change, but to possess Rome,—still
 Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance ! 1010

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—
 How could he doubt one moment ? Rome 's the
 Cause !

Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws—
 Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ;
 New structures, that inordinately glow,
 Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe
 By many a relic of the archetype
 Extant for wonder ; every upstart church
 That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,—
 Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,
 Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
 Once more in full possession of their rights.

“ Let us have Rome again ! On me it lights 1025
 “ To build up Rome—on me, the first and last :
 “ For such a future was endured the past ! ”
 And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung
 To give his thought consistency among
 The very People—let their facts avail
 Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn?—merely a perished husk
Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine 5

—A Rome indebted to no Palatine—

Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possessed
Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons?

Are this and this and this the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favoured tenantry pursue their way 10

After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips
At his mooned sandal. “Leave to lead the brawls 15
“Here i' the atria?” No, friend! He that sprawls
On aught but a stibadium . . . what his dues
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch, 20

Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,
Nay, even the worst,—just house them! Any cave
Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass 25
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,
And I am dead! But here 's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells

Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was
rough,
But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What 's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter—what 's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque—
Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidion,
—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours—resemblance what, between
That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen—
These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!
The work marched: step by step,—a workman fit
Took each, nor too fit,—to one task, one time,—
No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,
To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage,—
Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple log 's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you)
"merge
"At once all workmen in the demiurge,
"All epochs in a lifetime, every task
"In one!" So should the sudden city bask

I' the day—while those we 'd feast there, want
the knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and
brack,

Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan, 65
Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.

"Enough of Rome ! 'T was happy to conceive

"Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave

"Me of that credit : for the rest, her spite

"Is an old story—serves my folly right

70

"By adding yet another to the dull

"List of abortions—things proved beautiful

"Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."

He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw

The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift

75

Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift

Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,

Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archetype,

"Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart !"

And then a low voice wound into his heart :

80

"Sordello !" (low as some old Pythoness

Conceding to a Lydian King's distress

The cause of his long error—one mistake

Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake !

"God has conceded two sights to a man—

85

"One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,

"The other, of the minute's work, man's first

"Step to the plan's completeness: what's dispersed

"Save hope of that supreme step which, described

"Earliest, was meant still to remain untried

90

"Only to give you heart to take your own

"Step, and there stay, leaving the rest alone ?

"Where is the vanity? Why count as one

"The first step, with the last step? What is gone

"Except Rome's aëry magnificence,

95

"That last step you 'd take first?—an evidence

- “ You were God : be man now ! Let those
glances fall !
- “ The basis, the beginning step of all,
- “ Which proves you just a man—is that gone too ?
- “ Pity to disconcert one versed as you 100
- “ In fate’s ill-nature ! but its full extent
- “ Eludes Sordello, even : the veil rent,
- “ Read the black writing—that collective man
- “ Outstrips the individual. Who began
- “ The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art 105
- “ Shall serve us : put the poet’s mimes apart—
- “ Close with the poet’s self, and lo, a dim
- “ Yet too plain form divides itself from him !
- “ Alcamo’s song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
- “ Woven into the echoes left erewhile 110
- “ By Nina, one soft web of song : no more
- “ Turning his name, then, flower-like o’er and o’er !
- “ An elder poet in the younger’s place ;
- “ Nina’s the strength, but Alcamo’s the grace :
- “ Each neutralizes each then ! Search your fill ; 115
- “ You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
- “ New Ninas, Alcamos, till time’s mid-night
- “ Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting light
- “ Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
- “ Every ideal workman—(to reject 120
- “ In favour of your fearful ignorance
- “ The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
- “ And point you but to those within your reach)—
- “ Were you the first who brought—(in modern
speech)
- “ The Multitude to be materialized ? 125
- “ That loose eternal unrest—who devised
- “ An apparition i’ the midst ? The rout
- “ Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
- “ That sudden flower : get round at any risk
- “ The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk 130

"O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign

"And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !

"—The very child of over-joyousness,

"Unfeeling thence, strong therefore : Strength
by stress

"Of Strength comes of that forehead confident, 135

"Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,

"A calm as out of just-quelled noise ; nor swerves

"For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves

"Abutting on the upthrust nether lip :

"He wills, how should he doubt then ? Ages slip : 140

"Was it Sordello pried into the work

"So far accomplished, and discovered lurk

"A company amid the other clans,

"Only distinct in priests for castellans

"And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed 145

"Its rule, their interest its interest,

"Living for sake of living—there an end,—

"Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend

"In making adversaries or allies)—

"Dived you into its capabilities

150

"And dared create, out of that sect, a soul

"Should turn a multitude, already whole,

"Into its body ? Speak plainer ! Is 't so sure

"God's church lives by a King's investiture ?

"Look to last step ! A staggering—a shock— 155

"What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock

"Endures : a column of black fiery dust

"Blots heaven—that help was prematurely thrust

"Aside, perchance !—but air clears, nought 's
erased

"Of the true outline. Thus much being firm
based,

160

"The other was a scaffold. See him stand

"Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand

"Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply

- “As in a forge ; it buries either eye
“White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth
clenched,
“The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-
trenched,
“As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
“Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with
thought
“At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
“The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
“The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
“They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
“Call him no flower—a mandrake of the earth,
“Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
“Rather,—a fruit of suffering’s excess,
“Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
“Of Strength, work Knowledge ! Full three
hundred years
“Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
“Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,
“Observe you ! quit one workman and you clutch
“Another, letting both their trains go by—
“The actors-out of either’s policy,
“Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
“Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
“Aix’ Iron, Milan’s Silver, and Rome’s Gold—
“While Alexander, Innocent uphold
“On that, each Papal key—but, link on link,
“Why is it neither chain betrays a chink ?
“How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
“For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back !
“Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
“Alone? Hark—from the hermit Peter’s cry
“At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
“Friedrich’s no liege of his while he delays
“Getting the Pope’s curse off him! The Crusade—

“Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
 “Than Strength, is safe. Hark—from the wild
 harangue

“Of Vimmercato, to the carroch’s clang
 “Yonder! The League—or trick of turning
 Strength

“Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at length. 200

“Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert making cease

“The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace

“Yonder! God’s Truce—or trick to supersede

“The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed

“We trench upon the future. Who is found 205

“To take next step, next age—trail o’er the
 ground—

“Shall I say, gourd-like?—not the flower’s display

“Nor the root’s prowess, but the plenteous way

“O’ the plant—produced by joy and sorrow,
 whence

“Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence? 210

“Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge?
 No—

“E’en were Sordello ready to forego

“His life for this, ’t were overleaping work

“Some one has first to do, howe’er it irk,

“Nor stray a foot’s breadth from the beaten road. 215

“Who means to help must still support the load

“Hildebrand lifted—‘why hast Thou,’ he groaned,

“‘Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had moaned,

“‘And Moses dropped beneath?’ Much done—
 and yet

“Doubtless that grandest task God ever set 220

“On man, left much to do: at his arm’s wrench,

“Charlemagne’s scaffold fell; but pillars blench

“Merely, start back again—perchance have been

“Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,

“Hammer the tenons better, and engage 225

- “A gang about your work, for the next age
 “Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
 “By Knowledge ! Then, indeed, perchance may start
 “Sordello on his race—would time divulge
 “Such secrets ! If one step ’s awry, one bulge 230
 “Calls for correction by a step we thought
 “Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
 “No progress ! And the scaffold in its turn
 “Becomes, its service o’er, a thing to spurn.
 “Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life 235
 “In store dispose you to forego the strife,
 “Who takes exception ? Only bear in mind
 “Ferrara ’s reached, Goito ’s left behind :
 “As you then were, as half yourself, desist !
 “—The warrior-part of you may, an it list, 240
 “Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
 “Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
 “By wielding such in fancy,—what is bard
 “Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
 “Elys so much, and in free fancy glut 245
 “His sense, yet write no verses—you have but
 “To please yourself for law, and once could please
 “What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
 “Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
 “But all is changed the moment you descry 250
 “Mankind as half yourself,—then, fancy’s trade
 “Ends once and always : how may half evade
 “The other half? men are found half of you.
 “Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
 “Can be accomplished presently : but flinch 255
 “From these(as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
 “Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
 “Of fancy,—then, while one half lolls aloof
 “I’ the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top—

SORDELLO

BOOK V

- “ See if, for that, your other half will stop
“ A tear, begin a smile ! The rabble’s woes,
“ Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
“ To sit about their town and quietly
“ Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,
“ With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
“ ‘ Polt-foot,’ sang they, ‘ was in a pit-fall now,’
“ Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—
“ That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
“ How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
“ Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
“ And wriggles round the archers on his head
“ To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread,—
“ And Cino, always in the self-same place
“ Weeping ; beside that other wretch’s case,
“ Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
“ The engine in his coat of raw sheep’s hide
“ A double watch in the noon sun ; and see
“ Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
“ Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,
“ Campaigning it for the first time—cut there
“ In two already, boy enough to crawl
“ For latter orpine round the southern wall,
“ Tomà, where Richard ’s kept, because that
 whore
“ Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
“ Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege :
“ And Tiso’s wife—men liked their pretty liege,
“ Cared for her least of whims once,—Berta, wed
“ A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso’s dead,
“ Delivering herself of his first child
“ On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
“ To fifty gazers !”—(Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier)—“ What if, now the scene
“ Draws to a close, yourself have really been

"—You, plucking purples in Goito's moss

295

" Like edges of a trabea (not to cross

" Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts

" For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate wafts,

" This very age, her whole inheritance

" Of opportunities? Yet you advance

300

" Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,

" There's Salinguerra left you to persuade:

" Fail! then"—

 "No—no—which latest chance secure!"

Leaped up and cried Sordello: "this made sure,

" The past were yet redeemable; its work

305

" Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,

" Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloe-haulm

Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm

To the appointed presence. The large head

Turned on its socket; "And your spokesman,"

 said

310

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?

" Few such"—(so finishing a speech no doubt

Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)

"—My sober councils have diversified.

" Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,

315

" Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"

The hesitating sunset floated back,

Rosily traversed in the wonted track

The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth

Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth

320

Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to crest,

That solid Salinguerra, and caressed

Palma's contour; 't was day looped back night's
 pall;

Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

 And much he made of the convincing speech

325

Meant to compensate for the past and reach

Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite

- To his noon's labour, so proceed till night
 Leisurely ! The great argument to bind
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind, 330
 —Came the consummate rhetoric to that ?
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
 Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
 Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.
 Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt 335
 A rendering the world its just accompt,
 Once proved its debtor ? Who 'd suppose, before
 This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
 At duty's instance could demean himself
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf ? 340
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
 Thus occupied ; then stole a glance at those
 Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged 345
 The need of Lombardy becoming purged
 At soonest of her barons ; the poor part
 Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
 Elsewhere ! But, though his speech was worthy
 scoff, 350
 Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact
 And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er
 lacked
 The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb
 At his accession,—looked as all fell plumb
 To purpose and himself found interest 355
 In every point his new instructor pressed
 —Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal
 To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
 He means to yield assent sure ? No, alas !
 All he replied was, “ What, it comes to pass 360
 “ That poesy, sooner than politics,

“ Makes fade young hair?” To think such speech
could fix
Taurello !

Then a flash of bitter truth :
So fantasies could break and fritter youth
That he had long ago lost earnestness, 365
Lost will to work, lost power to even express
The need of working ! Earth was turned a grave :
No more occasions now, though he should crave
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil, 370
Alter the past—nothing would give the chance !
Not that he was to die ; he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in—time to hope and time despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice 375
As saved a trouble ; he might, at his choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way—for prop,
A thrysus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by,—far from blame, 380
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part
Survived him. “ Rather tear men out the heart
“ O’ the truth!”—Sordello muttered, and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack 385
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task ; beneath, the carroch’s warning boomed ;
He must decide with Tito ; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree 390
With his admonisher—“ Assist the Pope,
“ Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope
“ O’ the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All—
“ Change Secular to Evangelical”—
Echoing his very sentence : all seemed lost, 395

When suddenly he looked up, laughingly almost,
To Palma : "This opinion of your friend's—
"For instance, would it answer Palma's ends ?
"Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our
Strength"—

(Here he drew out his baldric to its length) 400

—"To the Pope's Knowledge—let our captives slip,
"Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip
"Azzowith . . . what I hold here ! Who'll subscribe
"To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
"Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used, 405
"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust !'
"—When Constance, for his couplets, would
promote

"Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat,
"To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
"Not that I see where couplet-making jars 410
"With common sense : at Mantua I had borne
"This chanted, better than their most forlorn
"Of bull-baits,—that 's indisputable !"

Brave !

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save !
All 's at an end : a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes ? 415
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special link ?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.

What were rewarded here, or what amerced 420
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and head
Of—"Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said, 425
—"The Great Men," in the people's dialect ?
And not a moment did this scorn affect

Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
 Asking "what was," obtained a full response. 430
 Bid Naddo think at Mantua—he had but
 To look into his promptuary, put
 Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
 But was Sordello fitted thus for each
 Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul, 435
 Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
 A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
 Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,
 Changes, assimilates its aliment.
 Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent? 440
 Next day no formularies more you saw
 Than figs or olives in a sated maw.
 'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;
 They lose themselves in that, means to an end,
 The many old producing some one new, 445
 A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
 The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives
 A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves
 Together in his stomach rattle loose;
 You find them perfect next day to produce: 450
 But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
 Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
 Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored
 Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing: 455
 And round those three the People formed a ring,
 Of visionary judges whose award
 He recognized in full—faces that barred
 Henceforth return to the old careless life,
 In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife 460
 For their sake must not be ignobly fought;
 All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
 The issue of this strife to reinstate

Them in the right of taking it—in fact
 He must be proved king ere they could exact 465
 Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
 Was in his quite forgetting for a time
 Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
 Disguised the royalty so much : he there— 470
 And Salinguerra yet all-unaware
 Who was the lord, who liegeman !

“ Thus I lay

“ On thine my spirit and compel obey
 “ His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent to build 475
 “ Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
 “ In what such builder should have been, as brook
 “ One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
 “ His function ! Free me from that shame, I bend
 “ A brow before, suppose new years to spend,— 480
 “ Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—
 “ Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
 “ At any crowd he claims ! That I must cede
 “ Shamed now, my right to my especial meed—
 “ Confess thee fitter help the world than I 485
 “ Ordained its champion from eternity,
 “ Is much : but to behold thee scorn the post
 “ I quit in thy behalf—to hear thee boast
 “ What makes my own despair ! ” And while he
 rung

The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung, 490
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
 Into the distance, or embowering vied
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier ;
 And crowds of faces—(only keeping clear
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground 495
 To fight their battle from)—deep clustered round
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death

Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint 500
 Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl
 The snaky volumes hither ! Is Typhon all
 For Hercules to trample—good report
 From Salinguerra only to extort ?

“ So was I ” (closed he his inculcating 505
 A poem must be earth’s essential king)
 “ So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
 “ T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,
 “ But one deposed who, caring not exert
 “ Its proper essence, trifled malapert 510
 “ With accidents instead—good things assigned
 “ As heralds of a better thing behind—
 “ And, worthy through display of these, put forth
 “ Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
 “ That constitutes him king precisely since 515
 “ As yet no other spirit may evince
 “ Its like : the power he took most pride to test,
 “ Wherby all forms of life had been professed
 “ At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
 “ Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth 520
 “ Should, in its novelty, be kingship’s proof.
 “ Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
 “ The several forms he longed to imitate,
 “ Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.

“ Those forms, unalterable first as last, 525
 “ Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
 “ Of nature : what would come of being free,
 “ By action to exhibit tree for tree,
 “ Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
 “ One veritable man or woman more ? 530
 “ Means to an end, such proofs are : what the end ?
 “ Let essence, whatsoe’er it be, extend—
 “ Never contract. Already you include
 “ The multitude ; then let the multitude

- “Include yourself ; and the result were new : 535
 “Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
 “This were to live and move and have, in them,
 “Your being, and secure a diadem
 “You should transmit (because no cycle yearns
 “Beyond itself, but on itself returns) 540
 “When, the full sphere in wane, the world o’erlaid
 “Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
 “Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
 “More potent than the last, of human will,
 “And some new king depose the old. Of such 545
 “Am I—whom pride of this elates too much ?
 “Safe, rather say, ’mid troops of peers again ;
 “I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
 “Deeds once sufficed : for, let the world roll back,
 “Who fails, through deeds howe’er diverse, retrack 550
 “My purpose still, my task ? A teeming crust—
 “Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict ! Then, needs
 must
 “Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
 “The brawl to—yellow-bearded Jupiter ?
 “No ! Saturn ; some existence like a pact 555
 “And protest against Chaos, some first fact
 “I’ the faint of time. My deep of life, I know
 “Is unavailing e’en to poorly show” . . .
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
 . . . “Deeds in their due gradation till Song
 dawnd— 560
 “The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
 “All in degree, no way diverse in kind
 “From minds about it, minds which, more or less,
 “Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
 “Themselves on somewhat ; but one mind has
 climbed 565
 “Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
 “Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,

- "Soul is from body still to disengage
 "As tending to a freedom which rejects
 "Such help and incorporeally affects 570
 "The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
 "Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
 "Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
 "To patiently perform till Song produced
 "Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind : divest 575
 "Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed
 "Will draws above us ! All then is to win
 "Save that. How much for me, then ? where begin
 "My work ? About me, faces ! and they flock,
 "The earnest faces. What shall I unlock 580
 "By song ? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
 "To minister : how much can mortals see
 "Of Life ? No more than so ? I take the task
 "And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
 "Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress, 585
 "This light, this shade make prominent, suppress
 "All ordinary hues that softening blend
 "Such natures with the level. Apprehend
 "Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
 "Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot, 590
 "To those you doubt concerning ! I enwomb
 "Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb ;
 "Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
 "With the black chastening river I engulph !
 "Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine 595
 "With languors of the planet of decline—
 "These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
 "Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
 "Thus marshalled in the masque ! Myself, the
 while,
 "As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile 600
 "At my own showing ! Next age—what's to do ?
 "The men and women stationed hitherto

- “ Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
 “ Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
 “ At soonest, in the world : light, thwarted, breaks 605
 “ A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
 “ Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom : behold
 “ How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
 “ Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
 “ Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make,
 war wage, 610
- “ In presence of you all ! Myself, implied
 “ Superior now, as, by the platform’s side,
 “ I bade them do and suffer,—would last content
 “ The world . . . no—that’s too far ! I circumvent
 “ A few, my masque contented, and to these 615
 “ Offer unveil the last of mysteries—
 “ Man’s inmost life shall have yet freer play :
 “ Once more I cast external things away,
 “ And natures composite, so decompose
 “ That” . . . Why, he writes *Sordello* !
- “ How I rose, 620
- “ And how have you advanced ! since evermore
 “ Yourselves effect what I was fain before
 “ Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
 “ What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
 “ How we attain to talk as brothers talk, 625
 “ In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
 “ From discontinuing old aids. To-day
 “ Takes in account the work of Yesterday :
 “ Has not the world a Past now, its adept
 “ Consults ere he dispense with or accept
 “ New aids ? a single touch more may enhance, 630
 “ A touch less turn to insignificance
 “ Those structures’ symmetry the past has strewed
 “ The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere
 rude
 “ Explicit details ! ’t is but brother’s speech 635

- “ We need, speech where an accent’s change gives
each
- “ The other’s soul—no speech to understand
- “ By former audience : need was then to expand,
- “ Expatriate—hardly were we brothers ! true—
- “ Nor I lament my small remove from you, 640
- “ Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
- “ Accomplished turn to means : my art intends
- “ New structure from the ancient: as they changed
- “ The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
- “ The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright 645
- “ As in his desert, by some simple bright
- “ Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
- “ Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
- “ From earth’s reputed consummations razed
- “ A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed 650
- “ Above. Ah, whose that fortune ? Ne’ertheless
- “ E’en he must stoop contented to express
- “ No tithe of what ’s to say—the vehicle
- “ Never sufficient : but his work is still
- “ For faces like the faces that select 655
- “ The single service I am bound effect,—
- “ That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
- “ Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
- “ The Kaiser’s coming—which with heart, soul,
strength,
- “ I labour for, this eve, who feel at length 660
- “ My past career’s outrageous vanity,
- “ And would, as its amends, die, even die
- “ Now I first estimate the boon of life,
- “ If death might win compliance—sure, this strife
- “ Is right for once—the People my support.” 665

My poor Sordello ! what may we extort
By this, I wonder ? Palma’s lighted eyes
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
Began, “ You love him—what you ’d say at large

"Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge 670
 "To me, his friend, peruse : I guessed indeed
 "You were no stranger to the course decreed.
 "He bids me leave his children to the saints :
 "As for a certain project, he acquaints
 "The Pope with that, and offers him the best 675
 "Of your possessions to permit the rest
 "Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
 "Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
 "—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
 "Clutches already ; extricate, who can, 680
 "Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
 "Loria and Cartiglione !—all must go,
 "And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then !

Lost

"This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
 "Procuring ; thirty years—as good I 'd spent 685
 "Like our admonisher ! But each his bent
 "Pursues : no question, one might live absurd
 "Oneself this while, by deed as he by word
 "Persisting to obtrude an influence where
 "'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare 690
 "With twice the fortune, youngster !—I submit,
 "Happy to parallel my waste of wit
 "With the renowned Sordello's : you decide
 "A course for me. Romano may abide
 "Romano,—Bacchus ! After all, what dearth 695
 "Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth ?
 "Say there 's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
 "Betide competitors, unless they style
 "Themselves Romano ? Were it worth my while
 "To try my own luck ! But an obscure place 700
 "Suits me—there wants a youth to bustle, stalk
 "And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,
 "Most flaunting badges—how, I might make clear
 "Since Fredrich's very purposes lie here

"—Here, pity they are like to lie ! For me, 705

" With station fixed unceremoniously

" Long since, small use contesting ; I am but

" The liegeman—you are born the lieges : shut

" That gentle mouth now ! or resume your kin

" In your sweet self ; were Palma Ecelin 710

" For me to work with ! Could that neck endure

" This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,

" She should . . . or might one bear it for her ?

Stay—

" I have not been so flattered many a day

" As by your pale friend—Bacchus ! The least help 715

" Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp :

" His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue

" Beside : too writhled—but, the main thing, young—

" I could . . . why, look ye ! "

And the badge was thrown

Across Sordello's neck : " This badge alone 720

" Makes you Romano's Head—becomes superb

" On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb

" The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,

Nor even dreamed about before—in fact,

Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce— 725

But he had dallied overmuch, this once,

With power : the thing was done, and he, aware

The thing was done, proceeded to declare—

(So like a nature made to serve, excel

In serving, only feel by service well !) 730

—That he would make Sordello that and more.

" As good a scheme as any. What 's to pore

" At in my face ?" he asked—" ponder instead

" This piece of news ; you are Romano's Head !

" One cannot slacken pace so near the goal, 735

“Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
 “This time ! For you there’s Palma to espouse—
 “For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
 “Like my compeer.”

On which ensued a strange

And solemn visitation ; there came change 740

O'er every one of them ; each looked on each :

Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.

And when the giddiness sank and the haze

Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,

Sordello with the baldric on, his sire 745

Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire

Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill,—

Night at its ebb,—Palma was found there still

Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed

A year ago, while dying on her breast,— 750

Of a contrivance, that Vicenza night

When Ecelin had birth. “Their convoy’s flight,

“Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame

“That wallowed like a dragon at his game

“The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks ! 755

“And wounded lies in her delicious locks

“Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,

“None of her wasted, just in one embrace

“Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,

“Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier 760

“And mightiest Taurello’s cry outbreake,

“Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,

“Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown

“His colleague Ecelin’s clamour, up and down

“The disarray : failed Adelaide see then 765

“Who was the natural chief, the man of men ?

“Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,

“Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe

“From wandering after his heritage

“Lost once and lost for aye : and why that rage, 770

- “ That deprecating glance? A new shape leant
 “ On a familiar shape—gloatingly bent
 “ O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
 “ Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before
 “ 'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate, 775
 “ Rage now might startle her when all too late!
 “ Then was the moment!—rival's foot had spurned
 “ Never that House to earthelse! Sensereturned—
 “ The act conceived, adventured and complete,
 “ They bore away to an obscure retreat 780
 “ Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain”
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) “ though pain
 “ Was fled; and what assured themmost't was fled,
 “ All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head
 “ 'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile, 785
 “ And only settle into its old smile—
 “ (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
 “ Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
 “ On either side their path)—when suffered look
 “ Down on her child. They marched: no sign
 once shook 790
 “ The company's close litter of crossed spears
 “ Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
 “ Slipped in the sunset from her long black lash,
 “ And she was gone. So far the action rash;
 “ No crime. They laid Retrude in the font, 795
 “ Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
 “ To sit beneath—constant as eve he came
 “ To sit by its attendant girls the same
 “ As one of them. For Palma, she would blend
 “ With this magnific spirit to the end, 800
 “ That ruled her first; but scarcely had she dared
 “ To disobey the Adelaide who scared
 “ Her into vowing never to disclose
 “ A secret to her husband, which so froze
 “ His blood at half-recital, she contrived 805

“To hide from him Taurello’s infant lived,
 “Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar
 “Romano’s fortunes. And, a crime so far,
 “Palma received that action : she was told
 “Of Salinguerra’s nature, of his cold
 “Calm acquiescence in his lot ! But free
 “To impart the secret to Romano, she
 “Engaged to repossess Sordello of
 “His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
 “The mask, but after years, long years : while
 now,

810

“Was not Romano’s sign-mark on that brow ?”

815

Across Taurello’s heart his arms were locked :
 And when he did speak ’t was as if he mocked
 The minstrel, “who had not to move,” he said,
 “Nor stir—should fate defraud him of a shred
 “Of his son’s infancy ? much less his youth !”

820

(Laughingly all this)—“which to aid, in truth,
 “Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown
 “Old, not too old—’t was best they kept alone
 “Till now, and never idly met till now” ;

825

—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how
 All intimations of this eve’s event

Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top

830

The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :

—“That’s now !—no prophesying what may be
 “Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
 “Native of Gesi, passing his youth’s prime
 “At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
 “On whom . . .”

835

“Embrace him, madman !” Palma cried,
 Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst
 apace,
 And his lips blanching : he did not embrace

Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand, 840

This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies
rushed ;

He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. "Nay, the best 's
behind !"

Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh : 845

"The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff

"These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils

"From : nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils

"Our triumph!—Friedrich? Think you, I intend

"Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend 850

"And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap

"Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap

"For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine—

"That's yours: I tell you, towardssomesuchdesign

"Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,

"And for another, yes—but worked no less 855

"With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,

"While now—look round! My cunning has pre-
served

"Samminiato—that 's a central place

"Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's case. 860

"By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,

"And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours

"The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed—

"Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first

"That flanked us(ah, you know not!) in the March; 865

"On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,

"Romagna and Bologna, whose first span

"Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;

"Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano 's sure!" . . .

So he proceeded: half of all this, pure

870

Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
 But what was undone he felt sure to do,
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—
 Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust 875
 Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 't was plain
 He hardly rendered right to his own brain—
 Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside, 880
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !
 Palma had listened patiently : but when
 'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one, 885
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
 Made him avert his visage and relieve
 Sordello (you might see his corslet heave
 The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then
 sank :
 They left him in the chamber. All was blank. 890
 And even reeling down the narrow stair
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware
 Palma was by to guide him, the old device
 —Something of Milan—" how we muster thrice
 "The Torriani's strength there ; all along 895
 "Our own Visconti cowed them"—thus the song
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,
 The turnings to the gallery below,
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go. 900
 When he had sat in silence long enough
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
 She stopped the truncheon ; only to commence
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of " Elys' hair 905

“ And head that’s sharp and perfect like a pear,
 “ So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks
 “ Stained like pale honeyoozed from topmost rocks
 “ Sun-blanchéd the livelong summer”—from his
 worst

Performance, the Goito, as his first :

910

And that at end, conceiving from the brow
 And open mouth no silence would serve now,
 Went on to say the whole world loved that man
 And, for that matter, thought his face, tho’ wan,
 Eclipsed the Count’s—he sucking in each phrase 915
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise

Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
 A crown, an aureole : there must she remain
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain 920
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)

To get the best look at, in fittest niche
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,

—“ Lauded her father for his treason now,”
 He told her, “ only, how could one suspect 925
 “ The wit in him ?—whose clansman, recollect,
 “ Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,
 “ Romano and his lady—so, might claim
 “ To know all, as she should”—and thus begun
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes,

“ not one 930

“ Fit to be told that foolish boy,” he said,
 “ But only let Sordello Palma wed,
 “ —Then !”

‘T was a dim long narrow place at best :
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
 As shows its corpse the world’s end some split
 tomb—

935

A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
 Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set

Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet
 Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within
 The hollow underneath—how else begin
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
 The ages than with Palma plain in view ?
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head
 erect,

940

Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked
 Monotony made out from his quick talk
 And the recurring noises of his walk ;
 —Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
 Who hearten each the other against heart ;
 Boasting there 's nought to care for, when, apart
 The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglymly near,
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught, 955
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
 And on he strode into the opposite dark,
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
 I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed
 thong

955

That crashed against the angle aye so long
 After the last, punctual to an amount
 Of mailed great paces you could not but count,—
 Prepared you for the pacing back again.
 And by the snatches you might ascertain
 That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft
 Asunder, crushed together, at command
 Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
 Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, “if we
 deign

960

970

- “Accept that compromise and stoop to give
 “Rome law, the Cæsar’s Representative.”
 Enough, that the illimitable flood
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed 975
 Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
 He found ’t was looked for that a whole life’s braves
 Should somehow be made good ; so, weak and
 worn,
 Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn 980
 Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
 But, Salinguerra’s prophecy at height—
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
 He had our very Italy to keep 985
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap
 To garrison the better—ay, his word
 Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,
 “Drive Trent upon Apulia”—at their pitch
 Who spied the continents and islands which 990
 Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the map—
 (Strange that three such confessions so should hap
 To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere,—
Cunizza, as he called her ! Never ask 995
 Of Palma more ! She sat, knowing her task
 Was done, the labour of it,—for, success
 Concerned not Palma, passion’s votaress.)
 Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned—
 Above the passage suddenly a sound 1000
 Stops speech, stops walk : back shrinks Taurello,
 bids
 With large involuntary asking lids,
 Palma interpret. “’T is his own foot-stamp—
 “Your hand ! His summons ! Nay, this idle damp

"Befits not!" Out they two reeled dizzily. 1005

"Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he,

In the old, somewhat insignificant way—

(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)

As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant.

Gone they are— 1010

Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,

Ecelin,—only Naddo's never gone!

—Labours, this moonrise, what the Master meant:

"Is Squarcialupo speckled?—purulent,

"I'd say, but when was Providence put out? 1015

"He carries somehow handily about

"His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines

Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines,

The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale
against

The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st 1020

Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell?

As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well,

Spite of the faith and victory, to leave

Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.

While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait 1025

No longer: these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,
And yet a false one, was, "Man shrinks to nought
"If matched with symbols of immensity ;
"Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
"Or sea, too little for their quietude" : 5
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left from out the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite— 10
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in 15
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
In a new fancy's birth—the speech keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone) 20
—Aroused him, surely offered succour. Fate
Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate
Herself,—best put off new strange thoughts awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that portentous
smile,— 25
What help to pierce the future as the past
Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last

The main discovery and prime concern,

All that just now imported him to learn,
 Truth's self, like yonder slow moon to complete
 Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet, 30
 Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
 Effort with counter-effort ; nor the range
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,
 Some other—which of these could he suspect,
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze ? 35
 The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
 Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
 Demanding only outward influence, 40
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
 Power to uplift his power,—such moon's control
 Over such sea-depths,—and their mass had swept
 Onward from the beginning and still kept
 Its course : but years and years the sky above 45
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
 His sensitiveness idled, now amort,
 Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
 At every passing instigation, grew 50
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place
 For much display ; not gathered up and, hurled 55
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,
 Without a function : others made pretence
 To strength not half his own, yet had some core
 Within, submitted to some moon, before 60
 Them still, superior still whate'er their force,—
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
 Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.

To each who lives must be a certain fruit
 Of having lived in his degree,—a stage,
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
 To stop at ; and to this the spirits tend
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,
 Amass the scintillations, make one star
 —Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar,— 65
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
 By winning it to notice and invest
 Their souls with alien glory, some one day
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
 Round to the perfect circle—soon or late,
 According as themselves are formed to wait ; 75
 Whether mere human beauty will suffice
 —The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
 Or human intellect seem best, or each
 Combine in some ideal form past reach
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim, 80
 Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,
 So to be served—all this they do not lose,
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
 What must be Hell—a progress thus pursued
 Through all existence, still above the food 85
 That 's offered them, still fain to reach beyond
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
 To swaying all Sordello : but why doubt 90
 Some love meet for such strength, some moon
 without
 Would match his sea ?—or fear, Good manifest,
 Only the Best breaks faith ?—Ah but the Best
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
 And is not ! Crave we gems ? No penury 95
 Of their material round us ! Pliant earth
 And plastic flame—what balks the mage his birth

—Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block ?
 Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the rock ; 100
 Nought more ! Seek creatures ? Life 's i' the
 tempest, thought

Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught
 With fervours : human forms are well enough !
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
 Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond 105
 These actual men !—and thus are over-fond
 In arguing, from Good—the Best, from force
 Divided—force combined, an ocean's course
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants
 Might seem at times sufficient to our wants. 110

External power ! If none be adequate,
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
 Himself a law to his own sphere ? “ Remove
 “ All incompleteness ! ” for that law, that love ?
 Nay, if all other laws be feints,—truth veiled 115
 Helpfully to weak vision that had failed
 To grasp aught but its special want,—for lure,
 Embodied ? Stronger vision could endure
 The unbodied want : no part—the whole of truth !
 The People were himself ; nor, by the ruth 120
 At their condition, was he less impelled
 To alter the discrepancy beheld,

Than if, from the sound whole, a sickly part
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf 125
 To succour, proud that he forsook himself.
 All is himself ; all service, therefore, rates
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
 The rest : but all in time ! “ That lance of yours
 “ Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors, 130
 “ That buckler 's lined with many a giant's beard
 “ Ere long, our champion, be the lance upreared,
 “ The buckler wielded handsomely as now !

“ But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,
 “ Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that, 135
 “ And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,
 “ Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks
 “ Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
 “ To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pears
 “ Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair, 140
 “ Lames barefoot Agathon : this felled, we ’ll try
 “ The picturesque achievements by and by—
 “ Next life !”

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
 Your claims !—for thus he ventured, to the verge,
 Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust 145
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
 Likewise : accordingly the Crowd—(as yet
 He had unconsciously contrived forgot
 I’ the whole, to dwell o’ the points . . . one might
 assuage

The signal horrors easier than engage 150
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
 To correspond . . .) this Crowd then, forth they
 stood.

“ And now content thy stronger vision, brood
 “ On thy bare want ; uncovered, turf by turf,
 “ Study the corpse-face thro’ the taint-worms’
 scurf !”

Down sank the People’s Then ; uprose their
 Now.

These sad ones render service to ! And how 160
 Piteously little must that service prove
 —Had surely proved in any case ! for, move
 Each other obstacle away, let youth
 Become aware it had surprised a truth

'T were service to impart—can truth be seized, 165
 Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
 Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
 So happily, no gesture luring it,
 The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
 Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain 170
 To the poor crowd's complacence: ere the crowd
 Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
 Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,
 If he shall live as many lives, may learn
 How to secure: not else. Then Mantua called 175
 Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled
 —Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume
 Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom;
 Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,
 A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets; 180
 Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
 Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
 Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
 With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
 Must truth be casual truth, elicited 185
 In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread
 So rarely, that 't is like at no one time
 Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
 Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
 The world's course right, been really in the world 190
 —Content the while with some mean spark by dint
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
 Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast, would stream
 Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam
 Was looked for at the moment: he would dash 195
 This badge, and all it brought, to earth,—abash
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
 The Kaiser from his purpose,—would attest
 His own belief, in any case. Before

- He dashes it however, think once more ! 200
 For, were that little, truly service ? "Ay,
 "I' the end, no doubt ; but meantime ? Plain
 you spy
- " Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
 " Of vision blur each intervening cause.
- " Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum 205
 " Of service, Now as filled as teems To-come
 " With evidence of good—nor too minute
 " A share to vie with evil ! No dispute,
 " T were fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule :
 " That makes your life's work : but you have to
 school 210
- " Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
 " Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
 " Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
 " Now, for the Then's sake,—hating whatyouloved,
 " Loving old hatreds ! Nor if one man bore 215
 " Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
 " The aureole, would it task you to decide :
 " But, portioned duly out, the future vied
 " Never with the unparcelled present ! Smite
 " Or spare so much on warrant all so slight ? 220
 " The present's complete sympathies to break,
 " Aversions bear with, for a future's sake
 " So feeble ? Tito ruined through one speck,
 " The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck ?
 " This were work, true, but work performed at cost 225
 " Of otherwork; aughtgained here, elsewhere lost.
 " For a new segment spoil an orb half-done ?
 " Rise with the People one step, and sink—one ?
 " Were it but one step, less than the whole face
 " Of things, your novel duty bids erase ! 230
 " Harms to abolish ! What, the prophet saith,
 " The minstrel singeth vainly then ? Old faith,
 " Old courage, only born because of harms,

- " Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms ?
 " Flame may persist ; but is not glare as staunch ? 235
 " Where the saltmarshes stagnate, crystals branch ;
 " Blood dries to crimson ; Evil 's beautified
 " In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside
 " And banish Evil ! Wherefore ? After all,
 " Is Evil a result less natural 240
 " Than Good ? For overlook the seasons' strife
 " With tree and flower,—the hideous animal life,
 " (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
 " For his solution, and endure the vaunt
 " Of nature's angel, as a child that knows 245
 " Himself befooled, unable to propose
 " Aught better than the fooling)—and but care
 " For men, for the mere People then and there,—
 " In these, could you but see that Good and Ill
 " Claimed you alike ! Whence rose their claim
 but still 250
 " From Ill, as fruit of Ill ? What else could knit
 " You theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from it
 " Were also free from you ! Whose happiness
 " Could be distinguished in this morning's press
 " Of miseries?—the fool's who passed a gibe 255
 " 'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,
 " Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
 " Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin !'
 " Much hold on you that fool obtained ! Nay mount
 " Yet higher—and upon men's own account 260
 " Must Evil stay : for, what is joy?—to heave
 " Up one obstruction more, and common leave
 " What was peculiar, by such act destroy
 " Itself; a partial death is every joy ;
 " The sensible escape, enfranchisement
 " Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content, 265
 " The cramped—at large, the growing circle—
 round,

"All 's to begin again—some novel bound
 "To break, some new enlargement to entreat ;
 "The sphere though larger is not more complete. 270
 "Now for Mankind's experience : who alone
 "Might style the unobstructed world his own ?
 "Whom palled Goito with its perfect things ?
 "Sordello's self : whereas for Mankind springs
 "Salvation by each hindrance interposed. 275
 "They climb ; life's view is not at once disclosed
 "To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
 "Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft :
 "But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
 "So, range on range, the girdling forests shoot 280
 "'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who
 scale
 "Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
 "Heartened with each discovery ; in their soul,
 "The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that
 Whole,
 "Could they revert, enjoy past gains ? The space 285
 "Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
 "The Parts were more than plenty, once attained
 "The Whole, to quite exhaust it : nought were
 gained
 "But leave to look—not leave to do : Beneath
 "Soon sates the looker—look Above, and Death 290
 "Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live
 "First, and die soon enough, Sordello ! Give
 "Body and spirit the first right they claim,
 "And pasture soul on a voluptuous shame
 "That you, a pageant-city's denizen, 295
 "Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—
 "Can force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
 "Bright attributes away for sordid muck,
 "Yet manage from that very muck educe
 "Gold ; then subject, nor scruple, to your cruce 300

"The world's discardings ! Though real ingots
pay

"Your pains, the clods that yielded them are clay

"To all beside,—would clay remain, though
quenched

"Your purging-fire ; who 's robbed then ? Had
you wrenched

"An ampler treasure forth !—As 't is, they crave 305

"A share that ruins you and will not save

"Them. Why should sympathy command you
quit

"The course that makes your joy, nor will remit

"Their woe ? Would all arrive at joy ? Reverse

"The order (time instructs you) nor coerce 310

"Each unit till, some predetermined mode,

"The total be emancipate ; men's road

"Is one, men's times of travel many ; thwart

"No enterprising soul's precocious start

"Before the general march ! If slow or fast 315

"All straggle up to the same point at last,

"Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,

"The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,

"While they were landlocked ? Speed their Then,
but how

"This badge would suffer you improve your Now!" 320

His time of action for, against, or with

Our world (I labour to extract the pith

Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,

Gigantic with its power of joy, beside

The world's eternity of impotence

325

To profit though at his whole joy's expense.

"Make nothing of my day because so brief?

"Rather make more : instead of joy, use grief

"Before its novelty have time subside !

"Wait not for the late savour, leave untried

"Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze

330

- “ Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
 “ Of life ! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
 “ All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
 “ Upon this Now, which time may reason out 335
 “ As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt ;
 “ But long ere then Sordello will have slipt
 “ Away ; you teach him at Goito’s crypt,
 “ There ’s a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
 “ Stirring, the few cope with the many, still : 340
 “ So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
 “ Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
 “ Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
 “ The whole calm glebe’s endeavour: be employed!
 “ And e’en though somewhat smart the Crowd for
 this, 345
 “ Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
 “ ’T is but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl
 “ Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
 “ At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
 “ And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe grape 350
 “ Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
 “ The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
 “ Among you ! For, who sits alone in Rome ?
 “ Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
 “ And set me there to live ? Oh life, life-breath, 355
 “ Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail, life ere
 death !
 “ This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
 “ But always streaming ! Hindrances ? They
 pique :
 “ Helps ? such... but why repeat, my soul o’ertops
 “ Each height, then every depth profoundlier
 drops ? 360
 “ Enough that I can live, and would live ! Wait
 “ For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
 “ To follow this ? Oh, never ! Fate, I trust

“The same, my soul to ; for, as who flings dust,
 “Perchance (so facile was the deed) she
 chequed

365

“The void with these materials to affect

“My soul diversely : these consigned anew

“To nought by death, what marvel if she threw

“A second and superber spectacle

“Before me ? What may serve for sun, what still 370

“Wander a moon above me ? What else wind

“About me like the pleasures left behind,

“And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh

“Cling to me ? What 's new laughter ? Soothes
 the fresh

“Sleep like sleep ? Fate 's exhaustless for my sake 375

“In brave resource : but whether bids she slake

“My thirst at this first rivulet, or count

“No draught worth lip save from some rocky fount

“Above i' the clouds, while here she 's provident

“Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent 380

“Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail

“The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail

“At bottom ? Oh, 't were too absurd to slight

“For the hereafter the to-day's delight !

“Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring:
 wear

385

“Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair !

“Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart

“Offer to serve, contented for my part

“To give life up in service,—only grant

“That I do serve ; if otherwise, why want

“Aught further of me ? If men cannot choose

“But set aside life, why should I refuse

“The gift ? I take it—I, for one, engage

“Never to falter through my pilgrimage—

“Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

390

“Were enviable, truly : I, for one,

395

- “ Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom
 “ To palace—be it so ! shall I assume
 “ —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,
 “ My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope 400
 “ One moment? What? with guarders row on row,
 “ Gay swarms of varlety that come and go,
 “ Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
 “ The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,
 “ Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—laugh 405
 “ At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
 “ Cross Beetle-brows the Usher’s shoulder,—why
 “ Admitted to the presence by and by,
 “ Should thought of having lost these make me
 grieve
 “ Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave ? 410
 “ Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,
 “ Are floor-work there ! But do I let alone
 “ That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
 “ Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ? No such fool !
 “ Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I ’d say 415
 “ I, is it, must be blest ? Then, my own way
 “ Bless me ! Give firmer arm and fleeter foot,
 “ I ’ll thank you : but to no mad wings transmute
 “ These limbs of mine—our greensward was so
 soft !
 “ Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft : 420
 “ We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
 “ Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
 “ Better move palpably through heaven : nor,
 freed
 “ Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space procecd
 “ Mid flying synods of worlds ! No : in heaven’s
 marge 425
 “ Show Titan still, recumbent o’er his targe
 “ Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game,
 “ Made tremulously out in hoary flame !

" Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
 " Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full, 430
 " Aside so oft ; the death I fly, revealed
 " So oft a better life this life concealed,
 " And which sage, champion, martyr, through
 each path
 " Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,
 " The crippling-irons and the fiery chair. 435
 " T was well for them ; let me become aware
 " As they, and I relinquish life, too ! Let
 " What masters life disclose itself ! Forget
 " Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
 " I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel ; 440
 " So much is truth to me. What Is, then ? Since
 " One object, viewed diversely, may evince
 " Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
 " That way repel,—why gloze upon the fact ?
 " Why must a single of the sides be right ? 445
 " What bids choose this and leave the opposite ?
 " Where 's abstract Right for me ?—in youth
 endued
 " With Right still present, still to be pursued,
 " Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
 " Each with its proper law and mode of life, 450
 " Each to be dwelt at ease in : where, to sway
 " Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
 " Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
 " Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
 " Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
 " That some should pick the unstrung jewels 455
 out—
 " Each, well ! "

And, as in moments when the past
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
 Himself quite through mere secondary states
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,

460

Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these ; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove,
glade,

And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved, 465
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break-up ; the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less, 470
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert 475
Their attributes within a Life : thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds them
cinct
Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—
Contrived to render easy, difficult, 480
This or the other course of . . . what new bond
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good
To its arrangements. Once this understood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone, 485
Quite out of Time and this world : all was known.
What made the secret of his past despair ?
—Most imminent when he seemed most aware
Of his own self-sufficiency : made mad
By craving to expand the power he had, 490
And not new power to be expanded ?—just
This made it ; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time
On Matter : let the Soul's attempt sublime

SORDELLA

BOOK VI

Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
And Sorrow follows : Sorrow how avoid ?
Let the employer match the thing employed,
Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed for ever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere ;
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here ;
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like. Now, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions ; take but this among
Many ; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer : but, since no control
Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self—had fain conveyed
Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not,—
Scarcely its minute for enjoying here,—
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing :
Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,
The minute gone, the body's power let go
Apportioned to that joy's acquirement ! Broke
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke—
From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds hoist
Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to the moist
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford,—

The chord's might half discovered, what should
pluck

534

One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
A saddest sight—the body lost alone
Through her officious proffered help, deprived
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,—
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,—
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
To stem the ruin even yet, protract

535

The body's term, supply the power it lacked
From her infinity, compel it learn

540

These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping, barred—
Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all agast.

545

So much was plain then, proper in the past ;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our knowledge
reach

550

No farther ? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds perhaps ?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed ?—nay, might have been and
would,

560

Each purpose ordered right—the soul 's no whit

Beyond the body's purpose under it.

Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,

565

And that sky-space of water, ray for ray

And star for star, one richness where they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,

Tumultuary splendours folded in

To die—would soul, proportioned thus, begin

570

Exciting discontent, or surelier quell

The body if, aspiring, it rebel ?

But how so order life ? Still brutalize

The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes

To all that was before, all that shall be

575

After this sphere—all and each quality

Save some sole and immutable Great, Good

And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood

To follow ? Never may some soul see All

—The Great Before and After, and the Small

580

Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,

And take the single course prescribed before,

As the king-bird with ages on his plumes

Travels to die in his ancestral glooms ?

But where descry the Love that shall select

585

That course ? Here is a soul whom, to affect,

Nature has plied with all her means, from trees

And flowers e'en to the Multitude !—and these,

Decides he save or no ? One word to end !

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend

590

And speak for you. Of a Power above you still

Which, utterly incomprehensible,

Is out of rivalry, which thus you can

Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man—

What need ! And of—none the minutest duct

To that out-nature, nought that would instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live—

But of a Power its representative

Who, being for authority the same,

595

Communication different, should claim
 A course, the first chose but this last revealed—
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
 What utter need !

600

What has Sordello found ?
 Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
 End where poor Eglamor begun ? So, says 605
 Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
 About the world : where, in the midst, they met,
 Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
 Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found ?
 For they approach—approach—thatfoot'srebound 610
 Palma ? No, Salinguerra though in mail ;
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash
 the veil

Aside—and you divine who sat there dead,
 Under his foot the badge : still, Palma said,
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes, 615
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
 Help from above in his extreme despair,
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
 With short quick passionate cry : as Palma pressed
 In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast, 620
 It beat.

By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
 His day's toil at Goito : the new-cropped
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,
 Twirled so, and filed all day : the mansion 's fit,
 God counselled for. As easy guess the word 625
 That passed betwixt them, and become the third
 To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
 Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks
 Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
 He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone. 630
 Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
 Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,

And, yet again, alas !

And now is 't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth
How Salinguerra extricates himself

635

Without Sordello ? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out ? If Richard sulked
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone ? The upshot, sure,
Was peace ; our chief made some frank overture

640

That prospered ; compliment fell thick and fast
On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then,—fairly reached the
goal,—

He, by one effort, blotted the great hope

645

Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
—Dispatched a message to the Monk, he heard

650

Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat
And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese
He but retained their rule so long as these

Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no mode

655

Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore perplexed—

660

(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious magnates with—nor, since he sent
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—“we lost

665

“Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—

"Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock ?")

Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock

In pure necessity, and, so destroyed

His slender last of chances, quite made void 670

Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes

Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,

Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed

He up this evening's work that, when 't was
brushed

Somehow against by a blind chronicle 675

Which, chronicling whatever woe befell

Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe

Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo

"Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"

The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire 680

Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps

Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,

Obliterated not the beautiful

Distinctive features at a crash : but dull

And duller these, next year, as Guelfs withdrew 685

Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too

Ecelin at Campese slept ; close by,

Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,

With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote

The cavalier he was)—then his heart smote

690

Young Ecelin at last ; long since adult.

And, save Vicenza's business, what result

In blood and blaze ? (So hard to intercept

Sordello till his plain withdrawal !) Stepped

Then its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick

695

Of time when Ecelin and Alberic

Closed with Taurello, come precisely news

That in Verona half the souls refuse

Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—

Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount, 700

Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
 Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
 Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
 From temporary station to a track
 That suited. News received of this acquist, 705
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy : who missed
 Taurello then ? Another year : they took
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three
 Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "The Free," 710
 Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—
 (Without Sordello !)—Ecelin at ease
 Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
 A little Salinguerra looked with soft
 Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age 715
 To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
 More years passed, and thatsirehaddwindleddown
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,
 Subtle—how else ?—but hardly so astute 720
 As his contemporaneous friends professed ;
 Undoubtedly a brawler : for the rest,
 Known by each neighbour, and allowed for, let
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
 Men who would miss their boyhood's bugbear :
 "trap" 725
 "The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
 "A battered pinion!"—was the word. In fine,
 One flap too much and Venice's marine
 Was meddled with ; no overlooking that !
 She captured him in his Ferrara, fat 730
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
 Than force, to speak the truth; there's slender laud
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
 To pull his death on such a man ; fate shears
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine thread 735

You fritter : so, presiding his board-head,
 The old smile, your assurance all went well
 With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell !)
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
 Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
 For the shame done his eighty years—(apart
 The principle, none found it in his heart
 To be much angry with Taurello)—gained
 Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
 But carry him to Venice for a show ?

740

—Set him, as 't were, down gently—free to go
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
 To point their children the Magnifico,
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
 His gait among them now—“it took, indeed,
 “ Fully this Ecelin to supersede
 “ That man,” remarked the seniors. Singular !

750

Sordello's inability to bar
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
 About by his strange disbelief that aught
 Was ever to be done,—this thrust the Twain
 Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom, brain
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God
 Who loves the world—and thus allowed the thin
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
 (Mere man, alas !) to put his problem quick
 To demonstration—prove wherever 's will
 To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill
 Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip—
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,

755

760

765

770

(So far from obsolete !) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.

Ecelin perished : and I think grass grew

775

Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù

By San Zenon where Alberic in turn

Saw his exasperated captors burn

Seven children and their mother ; then, regaled

So far, tied on to a wild horse, was traileid

780

To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I

take

God's part and testify that 'mid the brake

Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,

You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—

The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat

785

The modern church beneath,—no harm in that !

Chirrups the contumacious grasshopper,

Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre

Above the ravage : there, at deep of day

A week since, heard I the old Canon say

790

He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst

And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed

Only five years ago. He added, "June 's

"The month for carding off our first cocoons

"The silkworms fabricate"—a double news,

Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose !

795

And Naddo gone, all 's gone ; not Eglamor !

Believe, I knew the face I waited for,

A guest my spirit of the golden courts !

Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,

800

Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained

Its joyous look of love ! Suns waxed and waned,

And still my spirit held an upward flight,

Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light

More and more gorgeous—ever that face there

805

The last admitted ! crossed, too, with some care

As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
 But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
 —A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
 Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence 810
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
 Of irrepressible admiration—not
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend 815
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
 That upturned fervid face and hair put back !

Is there no more to say ? He of the rhymes—
 Many a tale, of this retreat betimes, 820
 Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
 Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
 Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved—
 Who thus, by fortune ordering events, 825
 Passed with posterity, to all intents,
 For just the god he never could become.
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb
 In praise of him : while what he should have been,
 Could be, and was not—the one step too mean 830
 For him to take,—we suffer at this day
 Because of : Ecelin had pushed away
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
 That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake :
 He did much—but Sordello's chance was gone. 835
 Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
 Apollo had been compassed : 't was a fit
 He wished should go to him, not he to it
 —As one content to merely be supposed
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed 840
 Really at home—one who was chiefly glad
 To have achieved the few real deeds he had,

Because that way assured they were not worth
 Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth—
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
 Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
 Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian
 fruit

And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
 All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
 Solicitous to be. A sorry farce

845

Such life is, after all ! Cannot I say
 He lived for some one better thing ? this way.—

Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
 Morning just up, higher and higher runs
 A child barefoot and rosy. See ! the sun 's
 On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
 Like the chine of some extinct animal
 Half turned to earth and flowers ; and through
 the haze

855

(Save where some slender patches of grey maize
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while
 Some unintelligible words to beat
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
 So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost
 rocks

865

"Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer,"—all that 's
 left

Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,
 Sleep and forget, Sordello ! In effect
 He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
 Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,
 Wake up ! The ghost 's gone, and the story ends

870

I 'd fain hope, sweetly ; seeing, peri or ghoul, 875
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank ! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough ! 880
Merely the savour's rareness ; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose :
Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours !
I 'd tell you that same pungency ensures
An after-gust, but that were overbold. 885
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.